

Taiwan: America's Next War?  
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# TAIWAN

AMERICA'S NEXT WAR?

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## **ABSTRACT**

**Title:** Taiwan: America's Next War?

**Author:** Major James J. Buckley, USMC

**Thesis:** The intent of this monograph is to forecast the People's Republic of China's maritime capabilities and intentions twenty years hence, in order to derive the U.S. maritime force projection requirements, with particular emphasis on the U.S. Marine Corps, necessary to prevail in a conflict with China across the Taiwan Straits.

**Discussion:** At present, the U.S. Marine Corps' force structure and size decisions are based on the legacy of its past and ambiguous judgments about its anticipated future capabilities. This author believes that force size and structure decisions are not possible unless one has a general sense of what missions will be assigned. To anticipate future Marine Corps missions, a Sino-American conflict over Taiwan is considered. To accomplish this, the vital interests of Taiwan and the Pacific Rim for both China and the United States are first deliberated. The purpose of this evaluation is to determine whether China is seriously considering repatriating Taiwan by military force. Furthermore, the paper then discusses America's likely reaction to a Chinese invasion of Taiwan. Concluding that China will use military force against Taiwan, and that the American counter-action will be the employment of military force in support of Taipei, based on current trends, the monograph then discusses, projects and compares both Chinese and American future maritime capabilities and advances. With these capabilities envisioned, the paper presents a 2015 wargame scenario -- Chinese use of force to repatriate Taiwan and America's maritime response. From this discussion and analysis, potential Marine Corps missions, capabilities, shortcomings, and force structure requirements are identified.

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## **TAIWAN: AMERICA'S NEXT WAR?**

**Now is the moment to be farsighted as we chart the path into  
the new millennium.**

**William T. Clinton  
1997 National Security Strategy for a New Century**

The intent of this monograph is to forecast the People's Republic of China's maritime capabilities and intentions twenty years hence, in order to derive the U.S. maritime force projection requirements, with particular emphasis on the U.S. Marine Corps, necessary to prevail in a conflict with China across the Taiwan Straits.<sup>1</sup>

With this as the thesis, there are certainly those who will ask: Why China? On the one hand, since the end of the Cold War, there has been stability and peace throughout Asia. Some may argue that if present trends continue, there is no reason for the future to be anything short of positive. On the other hand, it is inconceivable to handle the relationship between the United States and the re-emerging China without strategic thought.<sup>2</sup>

Many Asian analysts are less than optimistic that the cordial relationship between the United States and China will continue indefinitely. With the two nations having significantly different governments and polar philosophic views of world's future order, is it not then prudent for the military planner to anticipate, at a minimum, the political elite from either the United States or China to make misjudgments that will cause great strains in our relations?<sup>3</sup> When one looks beyond this period of relative peace in Asia, it is apparent that we are certainly not conflict free -- particularly when one considers the US - China - Taiwan relationship. Arguably, the Taiwan situation is the most important and sensitive unresolved issue within the erratic Sino-American relations.<sup>4</sup> What makes this situation even more complex, and thereby the one issue that can cause a clash between the United States and China

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<sup>1</sup> For purpose of this monograph, the United States' maritime power projection force includes those assets of the 1st Strategic Echelon, or as they are referred to by the Marine Corp' Plans, Policies and Operations (PP&O) branch, the "scene shapers." These forward-deployed and fast deploying forces "shape" the theater of operations to advance national interests, control crises when they erupt and prepare an area of operations for the introduction of heavier follow-on "war winning" forces of the 2d Strategic Echelon. The 1st Strategic Echelon is divided into two subordinate operational echelons: *The 1st Operational Echelon*, or response force; and the *2nd Operational Echelon*, whose "surge" forces rapidly deploy when the 1st Operational Echelon cannot contain the crisis. For further information on strategic echelonment, see Marine Corps Concept Paper, "Advanced Sea Basing... 2020 and Beyond," November 1997, 12-13.

<sup>2</sup> Ding, Xinghao, *The United States & China: Is a Stable Relationship Possible?* Presented before the Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, Berkeley, September 1997, 3.

<sup>3</sup> Comments of ADM. Joseph W. Prueher, USN, Commander CINCPACFLT, during a lecture presentation at Center for Naval Analysis (CAN) Conference, *China, the United States, and Japan: Implications for Future US Security Strategy in East Asia*, Washington, DC., 30 October 1997.

<sup>4</sup> Ding, Xinghao, 6.

is, in the words of Don Oberdorfer, "Because of the actors involved [China and Taiwan], we don't have control over."<sup>5</sup>

When looking to the future in the Western Pacific, many have drawn a historical similarity to the Western Pacific strategic climate of the 1920s and 1930s.<sup>6</sup> The critical difference, however, is to-day's military planner is hesitant to anticipate real-world threats that could ultimately give him strategic focus.<sup>7</sup> Absent viable aims, America's current force structure is grounded to each of the service's past legacies and their ambiguous and un-cooperating judgments about anticipated capabilities. Directionless, some speculate the future will require the services to conduct "humanitarian operations, peacekeeping operations, and high-intensity combat all in the same day and in the same operating area"<sup>8</sup> Without a "threat-base" focus, our ambiguous force structure will remain capabilities-based, and framed within the resource limits of a pre-determined and dwindling budget -- to be sure, a perfect recipe for disaster.

To prepare for war, the armed forces must have a clear understanding of the national strategy and a sense of the missions the nation will assign. This way, the armed forces can validate their structure and capabilities against anticipated real-world scenarios. Only then can the nation adequately build, refine, and depend on its military's capabilities. To this end, the tensions over Taiwan poses a viable framework. While the Taiwan crisis may not be the *only* future crisis, with the exception of the permanently hostile Korean Peninsula situation, no other lingering world problem has more potential to involve the nation's maritime forces in a mid to high intensity conflict.<sup>9</sup>

Before continuing with this monograph, however, a few caveats must be presented. First, the

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<sup>5</sup> Comment of Don Oberdorfer during a lecture presentation at Center for Naval Analysis (CNA) Conference, *China, the United States, and Japan: Implications for Future US Security Strategy in East Asia*, Washington, DC., 30 October 1997. Of note however, this assessment is not Oberdorfer's alone. Many other commentaries speculate that in the worst case, a decision by Beijing to use force, or assertive Taiwanese independence efforts, could provoke a military conflict that would gravely damage both parties, as well as the U.S. position in Asia. For other discussion on this subject, see Lyall Breckon, *Strategic Vision for the Pacific Fleet: An Annotated Briefing on Scenarios*, Center for Naval Analyses, (CAB 95-65), August 1997.28.

<sup>6</sup> Several analysts draw the historical parallel from the pre World War II Japan – United States relationship to the current Sino-American relationship.

<sup>7</sup> Agreement on this point was made by several Asian commentaries during a directed seminar conducted by the CNA, *China, the United States, and Japan: Implications for Future US Security Strategy in East Asia*, Washington, DC., 31 October 1997. Panel participants included the Honorable James Schlesenger (*former Secretary of Defense*), The Honorable Arnold Kanter (*former Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs*), The Honorable Richard Solomon (*former Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian & Pacific Affairs*), The Honorable David McCurdy (*former U.S. Representative*), The Honorable Richard Clark (*former U.S. Senator*), Adm. Stanley Authur USN (Ret) (*former Vice Chief of Naval Operations*), General Robert Sennewald, USA (Ret) (*former Commander in Chief of UN Command and Combined Forces ROK/US Forces*), Ambassador James Lilley (*former Ambassador to China*), Ambassador James Laney (*former Ambassador to South Korea*) and Ambassador Frank McNeil (*former Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for East Asia*).

<sup>8</sup> General Charles C. Krulak, USMC, Commandant of the Marine Corps, *Commandant's Planning Guidance (CPG) Frag Order (FRAGO)*, 31 August 1997, 8.

<sup>9</sup> Oberdorfer, Don. "In the Taiwan Strait: A Confluence of Dangerous Currents," *International Herald Tribune*, 24 September 1997, 1.

intent of this paper is not to demonize China, nor is it to argue that the Chinese government and military *will* execute an offensive against Taiwan. The intent is merely to argue that the People's Liberation Army (PLA) is likely *considering* the execution of this contingency as one avenue to achieve their most enduring national and maritime goals -- the full recovery and reunification of their nation. In this light, this paper does not assume that China has ruled out non-military means to accomplish its goal. To the contrary, at least presently China would certainly prefer to pursue diplomatic approaches to achieve reunification; rather than have to resort to the use of military force. Finally, when speculating China's future "maritime" capabilities, the reader needs to understand that in 20 years hence, the capabilities discussed are not necessarily *what* China will have, but rather what they *would like to have* based on their past and present trends.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>For simplicity and clarity, when this paper refers to the Chinese "maritime" capabilities, this includes *all* Chinese forces that can protect power over water -- including not only PLA naval forces but also parts of their army, land-based air, as well as ballistic and cruise missiles. However, when referring to the United States' maritime forces, this includes primarily the Navy and Marine Corps.

## CHAPTER 1

### A Strategic Look to the Future

**American foreign policy has indeed suffered from a long period of neglect regarding the Pacific. We really have a Eurocentric approach and failed to take into account the importance of Asia ... It is the world's most dynamic area, and American foreign policy has not been puffing enough energy, drive or resources into its Pacific policy.**

**Warren Christopher, Secretary of State  
Interview with the LA Times, Fall 1996**

The writing for a future Asian conflict is on the wall. The Sino-U.S. relationship is laced with complicated and explosive issues on the level of ideology, national objectives and culture. The strategic interests of the United States and China are so opposed that if present trends continue, one can only anticipate the future relationship to be strained beyond reason. The real issue is geopolitical, as both China and the United States have a yearning for great power. The United States is determined to be treated as the world leader, while China is not quite comfortable with that. The United States is the predominant power in the Asian Pacific, and the People's Republic of China (PRC) is an emerging power with ambitions to become predominant in the region. In addition, China is bothered by their perception that Americans regard themselves as created by God for missions on earth.<sup>11</sup> Therefore, as interpreted by several Chinese officials, expansion of American values is a "sacred cause." They point to America's foreign policy decisions in the past 100 years as having two consistent themes: A strong sense of ideology, and a habit of interfering in other's internal affairs. The Chinese perceive America desires to influence and change them, and they are insulted by this continuous arrogance and *real-politik* -- especially when their national interests are at stake.<sup>12</sup>

For China, the idea of a central kingdom and cultural superiority has always been deeply rooted in its people and culture, and this philosophy remains very influential to this day. Furthermore, China perceives America's political system, values, and cultural influence as a threat to its social stability -- particularly the ideological bias of the American mass media and its continued interference in China's internal affairs. The Chinese believe, as a result of the growing schism between the two nations, that they are now replacing the former Soviet Union as the villain in American mass media

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<sup>11</sup> Ding, *US & China: Is a Stable Relationship Possible?*, 8

<sup>12</sup> Ding, *US & China: Is a Stable Relationship Possible?*, 8.



They regrettably see themselves as soon becoming the next "bad boy" in the eyes of the American people.<sup>13</sup>

A flash-point that provokes this tense relationship is the unresolved Taiwan issue. Following President Nixon's historical visit to China in 1972, the Nixon-Chou communiqué stated, on the Chinese side, that Taiwan's status crucially obstructed the normalization of relations, while the U.S. acknowledged that "*all Chinese on either side of the Taiwan Strait maintain there is but one China and that Taiwan is apart of China.*" However, fifteen years later the American security relationship with Taipei continues in force, and thus Taiwan, or rather American recognition of the Nationalist government, continues to be the major issue in the Sino-American relations.<sup>14</sup>

It is reasonable to attest, therefore, that the mutually agreed-on Taiwan policy is based on a premise that simply does not exist. On the one hand, the U.S. maintains the "one China policy," while in reality it considers the issue an *international* concern, and Taiwan an independent country in all but name. Compounding the issue, Taiwan is not interested in becoming part of China, and is moving as close as it can towards independence without actually declaring it.<sup>15</sup> On the other hand, since its recovery of Hong Kong from Great Britain, resolving the Taiwan issue is now the top priority on China's lost territory agenda. To China, the situation is an *internal* issue and the PRC's leadership's credibility rests on Taiwan's successful re-unification. To the Chinese leadership, Taiwan is an inseparable part of China and a reflection of their international status. If the Chinese leadership is perceived to have lost Taiwan, they will lose what credibility is left of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).

While the Chinese people certainly prefer peaceful resolutions for their national unification, they cannot commit to the renouncement of force as a final resort. Therefore, *the Chinese believe force is the guarantee that the Taiwan issue might be resolved peacefully* For their government and its people, issues concerning national sovereignty are not subject to reconciliation or negotiation.<sup>16</sup>

### **Chinese Vital Interests & National Strategy**

The Chinese vital interests are directly linked to their sovereignty, security, and historical conflicts with the West, Russia and their Asian neighbors. The re-emerging China is determined to correct

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<sup>13</sup> Since the Tiananmen Square incident, what has become particularly irritating to the PRC is America's obsession and aggressive stance on human rights. China believes this issue is a threat to its social stability and a clash of cultural values. It is an issue they believe the United States should keep its nose away from so argues Ding, *US & China: Is a Stable Relationship Possible?*, 8 & 10.

<sup>14</sup> John K. Fairbank, Edwin O. Reischauer and Albert M. Craig, *East Asia: Tradition & Transformation*, (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Co 1973), 928.

<sup>15</sup> Comments of Don Oberdorfer, *CNA Conference, China, the United States, and Japan: Implications for Future US Security Strategy in East Asia*, Washington DC, 31 October 1997.

<sup>16</sup> Li Jijun, LtGen, PLA, "Traditional Military Thinking & the Defensive Strategy of China," edited by Dr. Earl H. Tilford Jr., *The Letort Papers*, U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, PA, 29 August 1997, 7.

the mistakes of its past, and not to make the same errors in the future. The Chinese feel that when previously faced by aggressive Western Powers, they failed to mount a strong resistance, and in the end, shamefully gave up without a fight. Before 1949, when the People's Republic of China (PRC) was established, more than one-thousand treaties and agreements were forced on China by the Western Powers and Japan. According to the Chinese, during this period as much as 1.8 million square kilometers of territory was taken from their nation. The Chinese refer to this period as the "period of humiliation," a time their people will not soon forget.

For China, the period began with a loss to the British in the Opium War and ended with the surrender of Japan at the end of World War II. The most demeaning event for the Chinese within this time was the 1895 defeat at the hands of Japan, after which Taiwan was ceded to Tokyo. For the traditional Chinese state, it was degrading enough to be vanquished by "barbarians" from far off lands, but China's historical superiority to its tributary neighbors, succumbing to a local power was a much greater blow. Although Taiwan had little material value for China up to that time, since its surrender to Japan over 100 years ago, it has become a symbol that reminds them of this national tragedy.<sup>17</sup> This, therefore, is the basis for why China today displays such strong emotion in matters concerning its national independence, unity, integrity of territory and sovereignty. It is also the reason the Chinese are absolutely determined to safeguard their national ideals under any circumstances and at all costs.<sup>18</sup>

With the recent collapse of the Soviet Union, China almost unexpectedly entered a new era. The Soviet Union's death removed the strategic threat on China's northern border, and in doing so also removed their strategic dependence on America.<sup>19</sup> With their booming economy powering the drive, China's direction is now fully focused on restoring their once great-power status. Their ambitious plan has both long and short-term goals. Within the next 15 to 20 years, Beijing will work methodically to expand its economy, regional influence and position within the international community. Within the next 50 years, it envisions a unified nation with power and wealth centered at the top of the world's hierarchy of power.<sup>20</sup> To China, this is the country's inheritance and destiny -- as rooted in "five

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<sup>17</sup> Thomas F. Christensen, "Chinese Realpolitik," *Foreign Affairs*, Sept/Oct 1996, 45.

<sup>18</sup> Li Jijun, 3.

<sup>19</sup> Chinese-Russian relations continue to grow warmer, punctuated in 1996 by President Yeltsin's visit to Beijing and by new security and economic agreements. The ideological rivalry of the 1960s is gone. Today, China and Russia share several common interests and have few areas of potential discord. A common interest that should concern the West involves money and weapons. Russia wants to sell arms, and China wants to buy them. Finally, with respect to security issues, the West must be cautious in that it does not push these two nations into a common alliance. If NATO enlargement and the Taiwan issue are both mishandled by the West, then it is quite possible that these two major powers could align themselves in ways that would be harmful to the United States so argues National Defense University's *1997 Strategic Assessment: Flashpoints and Force Structure*, 15.

<sup>20</sup> A.D. McLennan, "Balance, Not Containment: A geopolitical take From Canberra," *The National Interest*, Fall 1997, 63

thousand years of dynastic history only to be denied for more than a century by the Western barbarians."<sup>21</sup>

A recent Center for Naval Analyses (CNA) report concurs that China's national strategy is heading in this direction. The report concludes that China's future consists of continued economic reform under an authoritarian central government. The report also states that China's perception of its legitimate national rights -- full control over what it views as its "sovereign space" -- will eventually create "friction with its neighbors and the United States." For example, Chinese leaders see the U.S. policies on Taiwan, Tibet, the World Trade Organizations, and the continuing pressure on human rights as a challenge to their sovereignty. The report concludes that because of China's growing interests and changing strategy, a military crisis involving Taiwan "can not be ruled out."<sup>22</sup>

A premise for China's vital interests and emerging policies is that the American presence in East Asia is "neither required nor desired," and that the United States presence in the Western Pacific is now "beginning to infringe on the sovereignty of East Asian nations."<sup>23</sup> Therefore, China's current willingness to improve the Sino-American mood plainly reflects a *tactical* gesture rather than a *strategic* one.

**China's long-term vital interests are as follows:**<sup>24</sup>

- Maintain sovereignty and territorial integrity, and to prevent Taiwan from declaring independence.<sup>25</sup>
- Create a peaceful environment and good international relations favorable to China's modernization drive.
- Ensure that national security is not threatened, that Japan remains demilitarized and that a US - Japan Alliance against China does not form.
- Maintain internal political and economic stability so that a continuous improvement of the standard of living quality of the Chinese people is guaranteed. This is vitally essential to maintaining a legitimate leadership for China.
- *Integrate China's economy into the global economic trade and financial system* for its own interest as well as those of the international community.

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<sup>21</sup> Richard Solomon, "Who Will Shape the Emerging Structure of East Asia?", *The Strategic Quadrangle: Russia, China, Japan and the United States*, edited by Michael Mandelbaum; Council for Foreign Relations Press, 1995, 200.

<sup>22</sup> Dr. H.J. Kenney & Mr. C. Yung, *Chinese Maritime Strategies: Overviews and Goals*, Center for Naval Analyses (CNA), Alexandria, VA, p.3-10

<sup>23</sup> ML. Breckon & T.J. Hirschfeld, *The Dynamics of Security in the Asia-Pacific Region*, Center for Naval Analyses (CNA), Alexandria, VA, (CRM 95-172), January 1996,2.

<sup>24</sup> Xinghao Ding, Shangji Institute for Strategic Studies, *US-Japan-China Triangle in North East Asia*, presented at the CNA Conference, *China, the United States, and Japan: Implications for Future US Security Strategy in East Asia*, Washington DC. 30 October 1997. 9. According to Xingbao, this list of China's long term vital interests and intentions is "as perceived by most intellectuals."

<sup>25</sup> If the PRC leadership concludes that an all-out war is in order to recover Taiwan, negative reactions from Asian neighbors, even Japan, will not deter them so argues Edward Dreyer and June Teufel-Dreyer, *The Chinese Peoples Liberation Army's Perception of an Invasion of Taiwan*, in Peter Kien-hing Yu, *The Chinese PLA's Perception of an Invasion of Taiwan: Not to Attack/To Attack*, (Contemporary U.S.-Asia Research Institute, NY, NY, October 1996), 60.

In an article appearing in the December 1995 issue of National Defense University's *Strategic Form*, Dr. Ronald Montaperto's argues that China's leaders believe the key to great power status is a world class economy and military.<sup>26</sup> Since they presently accept that they are deficient in both, most Chinese foreign policy journals, newspapers and other works indicate a positive *near-term* security trend in Asia Furthermore, China's leaders know they are in no position to implement fully their long-term national strategy, nor can they influence or control many of their long-term interests. Lacking the requisite strength, it is not prudent to address these issues today, but they are determined to do so in the future. In the short run, therefore, China will not make waves. They will be patient, and will make concessions to other nations so they can maintain regional peace in the near-term to obtain the requisite strength to achieve their goals in the long-term. Most important, in the near term, they will maintain positive relations with the United States.

In the long run, however, China anticipates problems with the United States. They foresee problems because they believe the U.S. will challenge their quest for gaining global status. For example, China believes the current U.S. - Japan security alliance is directed against China,<sup>27</sup> and that the U.S. military presence in the Asia-Pacific, once a Cold War necessity, now serves as an instrument of containment.<sup>28</sup> However, as discussed earlier, China understands that today they are in no position for a face-off with the United States. At present, therefore, they patiently plan and prepare for the inevitable conflict they envision in the future. This philosophy is visible in the writing of General Mi Zhenyu, Vice-Commandant of the Academy of Military Science in Beijing. In 1996, he wrote, "For a relatively long time it will be absolutely necessary that we quietly nurse our sense of vengeance ... we must concede our abilities and bide our time."<sup>29</sup>

Taking advantage of this positive near-term security environment provides the PLA the luxury of basing their main military program on a long term criterion. According to many Chinese authors, it does little good to catch up with today's Western technology. Therefore, at present they are advocating military research, experiments and prototypes, but no extended or premature military production within the next decade.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Ronald Montaperto, "China as a Military Power," *Strategic Form*, Institute for National Strategic Studies, National Defense University, Washington DC, Number 56, December 1995,1.

<sup>27</sup> Ding, *The United States & China: Is a Stable Relationship Possible?*, 7.

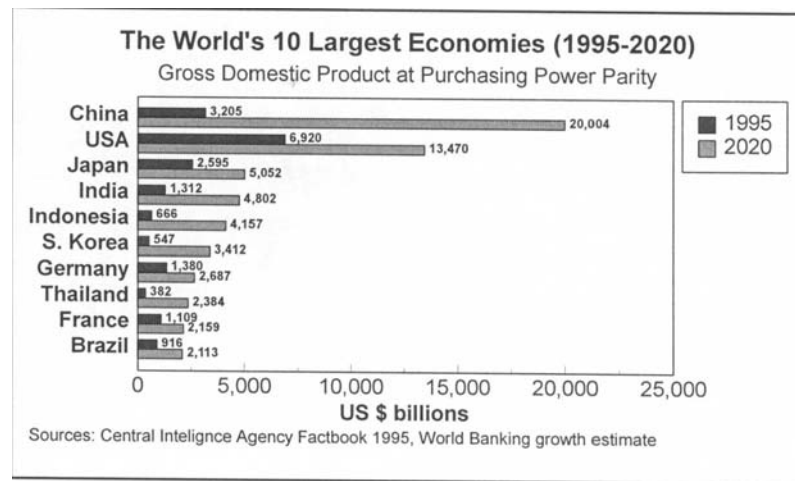
<sup>28</sup> Ding, *The United States & China: Is a Stable Relationship Possible?*, 7.

<sup>29</sup> Megatrends China, Beijing: Hauling Publishing House, May 1996, as cited in Richard Bernstein and Ross H. Munro, The Coming Conflict with America, *Foreign Affairs*, New York, NY, March/April 1997, p.20.

<sup>30</sup> U.O. Zalamea, LtCom. USN, "Eagles & Dragons at Sea: The Inevitable Collision between US & China," *Naval War College Review*, Newport, RI, Autumn 1996, 65.

While this period of peace provides Beijing with a unique opportunity to continue their economic growth and the military modernization, several analysts caution that the use of force by China today cannot be totally ruled out. Modern Chinese culture considers the use of force a legitimate means to resolve internal and international disputes.<sup>31</sup> Since 1949, for example, the PRC has used force to achieve its aims at an alarmingly frequent rate. By teaching punitive "lessons" to one neighbor after another, China has fought more border wars than any other nation in the last half century.<sup>32</sup> However, with regards to Taiwan, since China presently lacks the necessary capability to project its military across the Taiwan Strait, it is reasonable to assume that the Chinese consider the recovery of Taiwan through diplomatic means a short term strategy, and the recovery of Taiwan by force an option for the long term.<sup>33</sup>

Concerning China's recent economic growth, many analysts concede that never has there been a country where positive change is so great.<sup>34</sup> As the graph below shows, the International Monetary Fund (IME) predicts that if China continues its double-digit growth rate, it will become the world's largest economy by 2010.<sup>35</sup> And economic



<sup>31</sup> Pillsbury, Michael, Dr., *Dangerous Chinese Misperceptions: The Implications for DOD*, prepared for the Office of Net Assessment, 1997, 7. Pillsbury writes that according to Lt General Li Jijun of the PLA, China over its 5000 years history, has fought over 6000 wars, both large and small. He states, "A majority of these wars have been fought for the unification of the nation and the harmonic coexistence of various nationalities .... At any particular time, no matter how divided the nation might feel towards each other, the final result would invariably be the emergence of a more comprehensively reunified China, with reconciliation amongst the different nationalities. Those who devoted themselves to the reunification of the nation in time of war and turbulence have left their names in history as great statesmen and soldiers whose thoughts and deeds had profound impact on later generations. For further information on this subject refer to Li Jijun, LtGen, PLA, "Traditional Military Thinking & the Defensive Strategy of China," edited by Dr. Earl H. Tilford Jr., *The Letort Papers*, U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, PA, 29 August 1997, 3.

<sup>32</sup> David Shambaugh, "Containment or Engagement in China? Calculating Beijing's Responses," *International Security* 21:2, Fall 1996, 187.

<sup>33</sup> The recovery of Taiwan is a PRC long term goal. The stakes are so high that Beijing is in no rush to bring the issue to resolution without having total control of the outcome. However, according to several Chinese observers, factors that would speed up the requirement to achieve this goal include the following: (1) Independence movement in Taiwan to a point that Beijing no longer considers the situation tolerable. (2) Outside support of Taiwan's independence. (3) Further and major outside high-tech arms sales to Taiwan. (4) Internal political situation in China that caused the Communist leadership to take action against Taiwan as an attempt to divert the nation's attention away from domestic strife and toward an issue that would nationalize the nation.

<sup>34</sup> Don Oberdorfer, CNA Conference, Washington DC, 31 October 1997.

<sup>35</sup> Wen-cheg Lin, *Will Beijing Use Force on Taiwan?*, in Peter Kien-hing Yu, *The Chinese PLA's Perception of an Invasion of Taiwan: Not to Attack/To Attack*, (Contemporary U.S.-Asia Research Institute, NY, NY: October 1996), 211.

power is naturally followed by military power. Paul D. Wolfowitz, former US Ambassador to Indonesia and Assistant Secretary of State under President Bush, cautions China's growth today as similar to the emerging Germany of the late 19th century. Wolfowitz argues that while China is presently a non-aggressive state, it has the incentive to become aggressive. Historically, they mistrust the West and draw their incentive from their past mistreatment by the West. According to Wolfowitz, within the next 25 years the world's economic "*center of gravity*" will be in Asia, and with this shift in world economics, the chasm between the West and China will increase. Wolfowitz warns that the United States must look at the long term and must realize that major conventional wars are not things of the past. He warns that the technological edge the United States holds today can be fleeting; "the equation can change very quickly."<sup>36</sup>

Today, however, Beijing is well aware that their military's capabilities are dangerously behind the West, particularly the United States.<sup>37</sup> The overwhelming American-led victory in the 1991 Gulf War epitomized this disparity. The speed and overwhelmingly technological character of the allied victory "shocked" China's military, for they quickly learned that they are years behind the market democracies concerning military power and capability. The take-away for China: *A significant modernization effort must be completed before they can compete on the modern battlefield.*<sup>38</sup> Within the next twenty years, therefore, China's military goal is to build a force with the capability to resist any country in the region, including the United States.<sup>39</sup>

To summarize, China's future will be shaped in response to pressures from both within and without. They are, and will continue to be, motivated by desires to preserve China's uniqueness -- a uniqueness firmly rooted in the subtle but enduring cultural values of its ancient society -- and by highly emotional and volatile nationalistic desires to restore China's greatness. However, China will continue to modernize and it will become a power of global importance because the Chinese are determined to do so; which means they will compromise where absolutely necessary. "China's leaders are aware that it was the forced and uncompromising resolution of this same debate in the 19th century in favor of China's traditional values (*uniqueness*) over Westernization (*modernization*) that eventually paralyzed China's promising efforts to modernize and contributed heavily to the violent disintegration

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<sup>36</sup> Paul Wolfowitz, CNA Conference, Washington DC, 30 October 1997.

<sup>37</sup> Alfred D. Wilhelm Jr., PhD., *China & Security in the Asian Pacific Region Through 2010*, Center for Naval Analyses (CNA), Alexandria, VA, (CRM 95-226), March 1996, 2.

<sup>38</sup> Debra E. Soled, *China: A Nation in Transition*, (Congressional Quarterly Inc., Washington DC, 1995), 197.

<sup>39</sup> Soled, 267.

of China and its 'hundred years of humiliation'." <sup>40</sup> The next 20 years will prove to be a time of transition from which China will emerge with a modern economy, buttressed by a modern military.

### **American Vital Interests & Regional Strategy**

The fundamental objectives of U.S. policy in East Asia have remained basically the same for almost 100 years, and run in contrast to those of China. Looking to the future, America will remain engaged indefinitely in Asia for three primary reasons: credibility, security and economics. In the words of Senator Sam Nunn, "No region is more important to the United States than the Asia-Pacific region, where America has fought three costly wars in this century and where rapidly growing economies offer the United States its greatest expanding markets." <sup>41</sup>

Among the most severe American concerns in East Asia is its military credibility. Former U.S. Ambassador to the Philippines and Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, Richard Solomon, claims, "If America does not remain engaged in Asia, the area will become destabilized ... we offer a buffering presence." <sup>42</sup> A U.S. failure to respond to overt acts of aggression is likely to confirm the increasingly widespread Asian perception of U.S. disengagement from the region. Many Asian leaders are beginning to fear the U.S., impelled by latent isolationism, will leave their nations exposed. <sup>43</sup> They point to the vacuum of power created by the demise of the Soviet Union and the American withdrawal from Subic Bay as an opening for a resurgent China. <sup>44</sup> For American credibility, maintaining a visible military capability in the Western Pacific is absolutely essential.

For the United States, this particularly becomes a concern with respect to their U.S. - Sino - Japanese relationship. Tensions or conflict between Beijing and Tokyo would certainly destabilize the region and strain U.S. bilateral ties with one or both countries. A military confrontation between Taiwan and the mainland would pose perhaps the most foreseeable threat to the U.S.-Japanese alliance. For example, if the United States chose not to intervene against a Chinese attack, the U.S.-Japan alliance would likely be discredited. The United States would no longer be considered a credible security guarantor for Japan, and for the rest of East Asia for that matter. In the end, this would not only cause a quick erosion of the U.S. - Japan alliance, but would also likely prompt Japan and other Asian nations to consider other strategic and military alternatives, including a rapid build-up of their independent

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<sup>40</sup> Wilhelm, 11.

<sup>41</sup> Sam Nunn, *U.S. China Policy: Seeking a Balance*, presentation given at P.H. Nitze Award Lecture, Center for Naval Analyses, Alexandria, VA, January 1997, 8.

<sup>42</sup> Richard Solomon, CAN Conference, Washington DC, 31 October 1997.

<sup>43</sup> Richard Halloran, "The Rising East," *Foreign Policy*, 20.

<sup>44</sup> Henry J. Kenny, "The South China Sea: A Dangerous Ground," *Naval War College Review*, Newport RI, Summer 1996, 103

military arsenals.<sup>45</sup> These reactions would fuel the already exacerbated regional tensions and ultimately would further degrade America's interests and security. American credibility concerns likely explain why during the March 1996 Taiwan Strait crisis, the United States quickly defined the situation as "vital" and sent two carrier battlegroups to the region.<sup>46</sup> Without American influence, many speculate there would be an escalatory regional arms race with China ultimately taking the leader's role.<sup>47</sup>

America's relation with Asia is also critical for America's own economic stability. Early in the next century Asia will be home of 16 of the world's 25 largest cities.<sup>48</sup> With this increase, so too will the flow of American investment, which has already tripled in the last decade and will soon approach the \$100 billion mark. At present, East Asia accounts for 2.5 million American jobs, and this figure is expected to continue its rise. America's trade with East Asian nations presently exceeds \$400 billion annually. This amounts to thirty-six percent of America's world trade (\$120 billion in US exports).<sup>49</sup> Comparing America's trade with the rest of the world, this is three times the amount America trades with Latin America, and one-and-a-half times the amount it trades with Europe. If current trends continue, these Asian trade figures are expected to double within the next five years. According to the IMF, by the turn of the century, East Asian markets will account for over thirty percent of the world's GNP.<sup>50 & 51</sup> American policy makers also understand that violence in the region will interrupt trade, financial flows and the transfer of goods -- all of which will hurt America economically. With these economic figures, it is certain that America's desire to remain the dominant power in Asia will remain as strong as ever.

**Concerning Asia, the United States' vital interests include the following:**<sup>52</sup>

- *Preserve the balance of power in Asia favorable to the United States.* This includes a peaceful, stable system of regional relations and *managed* resolution of conflicts. Although Washington accepts the "one China principle," the Taiwan Relations Act states that the U.S. will, "... consider any effort to determine the future of Taiwan by other than peaceful means,

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<sup>45</sup> Many analysts speculate that an all-out regional arms race would cause both Japan and Korea to develop Nuclear capabilities. For more information on this subject see John Barry & Russell Waton, "How We Match Up," *Newsweek*, 1 April 1996, 42.

<sup>46</sup> Wen-cheng Lin, in Peter Kien-hong Yu, 183.

<sup>47</sup> B. Garrett & B. Glaser, "Chinese Apprehensions about Revitalization of the US-Japan Alliance," *Asian Survey*, Vol. XXXVII, No. 4. April 1997, 383-400

<sup>48</sup> Hollaran, 3.

<sup>49</sup> Zalamea, 64

<sup>50</sup> Kenny, 103

<sup>51</sup> The October/November 1997 drop in the U.S. Stock Market and its link to the drop in Asian markets is a clear indication of the growing dependence between the economies. In the future, US financial markets will only continue to be more closely linked with Asia, and as a result, the US will be more dependent on, and vulnerable to, Asian policies and reactions.

<sup>52</sup> The listed vital interests were collected from several sources to include: Ding, Xinghao, *The United States & China: Is a Stable Relationship Possible?*, 5; M.L. Breckon & T.J Hirschfeld, *The Dynamics of Security in the Asia-Pacific Region*, 41; Martine L. Lasater, *A U.S. Perception of a PLA Invasion of Taiwan*, in Peter Kien-hing Yu, 263; James L. George, "China: Paper of Potential Tiger," *Naval Forces*, Summer 1997, 15.



including boycotts or embargoes, a threat to peace and security of the Western Pacific area and of grave concern to the United States.”

- *Maintain regional cooperation with Asian states* in order to influence the region's affairs and gain their support in securing extra-regional objectives. In the case of East Asia, the US must ensure that Japan and South Korea survive as free and prosperous states, allied to the United States.
- *Continue with the unimpeded growth and development in the region's economies on free market lines.* This includes full U.S. access for trade and investment Furthermore, the U.S. desires the continued growth of other major global systems including energy supplies and environmental systems.
- *Preserve access and transit* for military forces (including for Southwest Asia contingencies), i.e., prevent the emergence of a hostile power that could challenge America access to the region's oceans, seas and *sea lines of communication (SLOCs)*.
- *Protect US. commercial and other economic interests* in Asia
- *To prevent, deter and reduce the threat of nuclear, biological, and chemical (NBC) attacks* on the U.S. and its allies.

Along with America's vital interests, the wild card within a U.S. military response to a China,Taiwan dispute will be American public opinion. Therefore, the major uncertainty -- the reaction of the United States -- will not be known, even by the United States until the event occurs.<sup>53</sup> However, the image of a democratic Taiwan being attacked by the more powerful Communist government in Beijing would likely influence American public opinion in a direction favoring Taiwan. Pressure from Congress, the media, and the American public would likely persuade the President to take decisive action to resolve the crisis as soon as possible. This would be especially true if one or more of the following occurs: Beijing relations with Washington remain strained over trade, proliferation, and human rights issues; Taipei continues its effective lobbying efforts in the United States; and no other crisis requiring U.S. military forces were occurring at the time.<sup>54</sup>

### **American Military Presence In Asia**

While America's interest in Asia remain as strong as ever, and as China emerges as a regional power, the U.S. military presence in Asia over the past decade has significantly receded. Even optimistic analysts anticipate this trend to continue. In other words, the United States faces growing strategic *responsibilities* with diminishing manpower *capabilities*. America's departure from the Philippines in the early 1990s was just the beginning. By 2002, most analysts agree that the Korean unification issue will be resolved.<sup>55</sup> Following Korean unification, however, these same commentators also expect the

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<sup>53</sup> Edward Dreyer & June Teufle-Dreyer, in Kien-hing Yu, Peter, 69.

<sup>54</sup> Martin L. Lasater, *A U.S. Perception of a PLA invasion of Taiwan*, in Peter Kien-hing Yu, 257

<sup>55</sup> General consensus of seminar panel members at CAN Conference directed seminar. Participants included: James Schlesenger, Arnold Kanter Richard Solomon, David McCurdy, Richard Clark, Adm. Stanley Authur, Gen. Robert Sennewals, James Litley, James Laney, Frank McNeil,, 31 October 1997, Washington DC.

*best* America can expect as far as forces forward deployed on the Korean Peninsula is two American brigades. More likely, however, a reunited Korea will be reluctant even to allow any American forces to remain because of their need to maintain good relations with China.<sup>56</sup>

Compounding this dilemma, America will certainly not be allowed to increase its forces on Japan. Therefore, the 30,000 man force departing a re-united Korean Peninsula will have to return home. At best, the 70,000 servicemen forward deployed on Japan will likely remain the absolute limit as far as forward deployed American forces in Asia. Furthermore, while Japan may allow the United States to maintain its naval ports and air facilities, the forward deployed Marines on Okinawa are under increasing attack from Japanese public opinion. Some speculate that the Japanese "elite" may soon forbid forward deployed U.S. forces on Japanese soil at all.<sup>57</sup> To many Japanese, the 1995 rape incident on Okinawa has yet to be fully resolved. Soon, the United States and Japan will certainly have to reach a compromise concerning the number of Marines on Okinawa. For certain, however, as far as ground combat units are concerned, no more than the undersized Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF) will be allowed on Okinawa.<sup>58</sup>

Some may point to other locations such as Guam, Singapore and even Vietnam to forward deploy American forces. These ideas, however, are far more difficult than they first appear, and as many military analysts will attest, these options are simply "non-starters."<sup>59</sup> At best, America can depend on about 70,000 forward deployed forces on Japan and continuation of the multi-national exercises such as *Cobra Gold* and *Rim PAC*.

To summarize, as Americans "chart the path into the new millennium," four conclusions with respect to Asia can be made:

- *America has significant interests in Asia*, and will continue to pursue these indefinitely
- *Chinese and American interests will eventually come in conflict* since U.S. strategy toward the Western Pacific includes the preservation of a favorable balance of power and the prevention of the rise of a hegemon, the PRC ambitions are a direct long term threat to U.S. interests.
- *China's economic growth and military modernization will continue*
- *America's forward deployment of forces in Asia will continue to recede.*

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<sup>56</sup> Shambaugh, 187.

<sup>57</sup> Richard Salomon, CNA Conference, Washington DC, 31 October 1997

<sup>58</sup> Of the three Marine Expeditionary Forces (MEF) which make up the Marine Corps Fleet marine Forces (FMF), III MEF stationed on Okinawa is certainly the smallest with respect to both equipment and manpower.

<sup>59</sup> General consensus of seminar panel members at *CNA Conference* directed seminar. Participants included: James Schesenger, Arnold Kanter, Richard Solomon, David McCurdy, Richard Clark, Adm. Stanley Authur, Gen. Robert Sennewals, James Lilley, James Laney, Frank McNeil, 31 October 1997, Washington DC.

Adding to these, the dominant sense in the U.S. Congress is if China maintains its political system and trade surplus, a solid relationship between the two nations will never occur. Therefore, growing friction between the two nations makes a future encounter almost certain. "The U.S. wants China to change its political system, the fact is, China will not change -- they don't want to change and are strong enough that they don't have to change."<sup>60</sup>

Yes, the writing is on the wall. The chief obstacle to China's strategic ambitions is the United States. America's objective, *despite its regional reduction of military forces*, is to prevent any single country from gaining overwhelming power in Asia. China's objective, *with its modernizing military strength*, is to become the dominant power on its side of the Pacific.

The conspicuous flash-point is Taiwan.

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<sup>60</sup> Robert Sutter, CAN Conference, Washington DC, 31 1997.

## CHAPTER 2

### China's New Maritime Direction

**War between China and Taiwan is unthinkable. It makes no sense. It is as unthinkable as an Iraq invasion of Kuwait was in July 1990, as unthinkable as China entering the Korean War against the United States in November 1950, as unthinkable as Britain having to expel the Argentinians from the Falklands seemed in 1982.**

**Jim Hoagland  
*The Washington Post*  
11 February 1996**

Beijing's national strategy has significantly redefined its military's focus to the extent that someday China will exploit America's strategic vulnerabilities. For the past decade, the Chinese military has been undergoing a complete redesign in order to enhance its overall capability and flexibility. Its focus is now on winning rapid engagements in regional type conflicts. The Chinese call this new outward-looking doctrine, "*Local War of Limited Duration*" or "*Active Defense*."<sup>61</sup> Unlike Mao's defensive "*People's War*" doctrine, this new doctrine is offensive in both design and intent. Deng Xiaoping, the late Chinese leader, once explained that the active defense includes, "Our going out, so that if we are attacked, we will certainly counterattack."<sup>62</sup> By going out, Deng meant, fighting engagements "outside the country's gates."<sup>63</sup> In other words, far forward of China's land borders.

Accordingly, establishing a robust maritime capability is key to accomplish this strategy. General Lui Huangting, formerly the Commander of the Chinese Navy during the 1980s and presently one of China's top military and political leaders, is spearheading China's maritime direction away from a coastal defense (*jinhai fangyu*) and towards a blue-water defense (*jinyang fangyu*) strategy and capability. In a *Mahanian* style, Lui sees the forward control of the seas as the solution to protect the nation's coastal borders. Therefore, to achieve an early tactical advantage, China's future maritime forces will be outwardly focused with the aim of opposing their enemies well forward of their continental borders. To

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<sup>61</sup> Li Jijun, 6. For further reading on the China's "*Active Defense*" strategy see Jun Zhan, "China Goes to Blue Waters: The Navy, Seapower Mentality and the South China Sea," *The Journal of Strategic Studies*, September 194, 180-208.

<sup>62</sup> Zalamea, 66.

<sup>63</sup> Zalamea, 66.

accomplish this, Lui and others are pressing for a maritime strategy that calls for the capability to control the seas between the Chinese coast and the Pacific's "first island chain."<sup>64</sup>

Since it lies less than 100 miles off China's east coast, the decisive terrain within the first island chain is, of course, Taiwan. With China's new outward-looking doctrine, the island's strategic location is critical for dominating the Asian side of the Pacific. Located in *advance* of its mainland border, it serves as "an unsinkable aircraft carrier" to whoever controls it.<sup>65</sup>

Furthermore, the Chinese plan to establish a security buffer beyond the first island chain. Due to the increasingly widespread operational deployment of sea-launched cruise missiles, aircraft carriers, and other over-the-horizon weapon systems by the United States and other maritime nations, Liu and other Chinese leaders also foresees the need for an off-shore maritime defense strategy that provides security in-depth. Therefore, they also believe it is imperative to encompass naval security operations to the Pacific's "second island chain."<sup>66</sup> Along with their navy, the Chinese will likewise forward deploy specially tailored and highly mobile air and ground forces with sophisticated weaponry to the edge of the second island chain.<sup>67</sup>

While China's new national and military strategies are ambitious and aggressive, there are many who lament that they lack the capabilities to execute them. For certain, today China is not a maritime threat, nor is it much of a threat to the United States' regional interests. They cannot manufacture a reliable 1970s generation fighter plane, much less anything like the American F-16 *Eagle*. They rely heavily on the importation of Russian equipment to outfit their forces, and in most instances, lack the ability to maintain it properly; and they do not have the capability to conduct sustained operations more than 100 miles from their coastline. While China is certainly a land power, a maritime power it is not -- as far as the ability to project its power across the water, it is military inferior even to such countries as Singapore and Malaysia.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> The first island chain includes the arc of Western Pacific archipelagoes stretching from the Kuriles, Japan, and the Ryukyus to Taiwan, the Philippines, and the Greater Sundas.

<sup>65</sup> Robert S. Ross, "Beijing as a Conservative power," *Foreign Affairs*, March /April 1997, 39. The Chinese also fear that if in the future Taiwan allows the United States to station military forces there it can also be used as a staging base for engagements with China on the Asian mainland.

<sup>66</sup> The second island chain includes the archipelagoes of Bonin, the Marianas, Guam, and the Carolines.

<sup>67</sup> Soled, 265

<sup>68</sup> Zalamea, 67-71.

China's new military strategy, however, is not for the immediate future. In the meantime, as they presently rely on outdated weapons, they await the fruits of China's economic growth to fund and manufacture advanced weaponry for their soon-to-be modern military force. That being the case, within the 2010 to 2015 time-frame, it is likely the Chinese will be capable of challenging the United States in a broadening range of situations.<sup>69</sup>

### **Rebuilding The People's Liberation Army**

Since its lopsided defeat to Vietnam in 1979, China has been engaged in the most comprehensive experiment with respect to military reform that any country has undertaken since Japan's Meiji Restoration. Since then, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) has been experimenting with virtually every area of endeavor to acquire the capabilities, tactics and training methods needed to become a world-class military force.<sup>70</sup> Experiments focus on blending the best identifiable foreign (both East and West) concepts and technologies with China's rich military heritage to provide a modern defense establishment -- tailored to China's unique circumstances and needs. These profound changes are taking place in many areas to include: education and training; force structures; command & control, communications, and intelligence; research and development; procurement; logistics; personnel management, from recruitment to demobilization; reserve; and management systems for each area. Innovation and experimentation are the top priorities today; by the 2000 to 2005 time-frame, building the force becomes the priority.

One of the more interesting PLA focuses is its effort to improve the overall quality of its soldiers. Since 1989 the PLA has spent a significant amount on improving their living standards. This is a concerted attempt to overcome the common perception that serving in the PLA reduces one's ability to attain a better standard of living. Recruiting efforts are a concern for the PLA because of the unsatisfactory physical and educational conditions of their recruits. The more educated urban recruits who are needed to operate the increasingly technological PLA, lack the proper physical conditioning. At the same time, China's hardy rural youth, who currently comprise the majority of the PLA's recruits, lack the required educational background.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Wilhelm, 86.

<sup>70</sup> Barbra Opall, "China Seeks Arms for World Class Military," *Defense News*, October 13-19 1997, 3.

<sup>71</sup> Soled, 268

According to official PRC statistics, since 1989 China has increased defense expenditures by as much as 20 percent annually. The military budget for 1995 was slightly more than 63 billion yuan, more than 2.5 times of the 1989 figure. The current "official" defense budget is about 7.5 billion U.S. dollars. However, observers point out, as with all communist governments, there is a much larger unofficial budget, and actual defense spending is several times the officially disclosed figure. For instance, Nicholas D. Kristof, who regards the PRC's official budget as "a bit of a joke," suggests that Beijing's actual defense spending is more than 10 times the official figure; while another American agency, the *Arms Control and Disarmament Agency* (ACDA) puts the budget at \$50 billion.<sup>72</sup> Furthermore, Richard A. Bitzinger, a defense analyst for the Washington think tank, *Defense Budget Project*, estimates that the actual PLA budget is three to five times the official one, and therefore currently ranges somewhere between \$92 to \$143 billion.<sup>73</sup>

Regardless of the specific amount, for certain, the spending and emphasis on military modernization is making China's force structure much more capable. Their quiet and methodical planning is gaining momentum as they acquire a solid understanding of modern doctrine, tactics and capabilities. Reforms in organization, doctrine, education and training, and personnel practices are slowly bridging the gap. According to Asian specialist Art Waldron, within the Chinese military there are emerging "pockets of competence," that are beginning to rapidly spread throughout the PLA.<sup>74</sup>

In the near term, the PLA's principal source of military technology and hardware is Russian -- since most of China's weapons are based on Soviet designs, this is the most cost effective and least complicated near-term approach to integrate modern arms and technology into their archaic forces. Furthermore, as a recent article in *Asian Defense Journal* attests, Russian Arms industry eludes control and has no vision other than self enrichment, and China can exploit this chaos on this program quite cheaply. In addition to arming the force for the near term, China and Russia are holding trade fairs, exchanging high-level military visits, and signing several agreements to promote trade, joint ventures, technology transfers, and weapons sales.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Wen-cheg Lin in Peter Kien-hing Yu, 189.

<sup>73</sup> George, 2.

<sup>74</sup> Art Waldron, CNA Conference, Washington DC, 30 October 1997.

<sup>75</sup> Stephen Blank, "Russian Arms Sales to china: Purposes and Outcomes," *Asian Defense Journal*, July 1997, 12-14.

China's leaders, however, are aware of the importance of self-reliance in weapons modernization; thus, in the future the PLA's plan is to provide its own equipment and judiciously apply foreign technology where necessary. While selectively pursuing imports, the Chinese are dealing with multiple sources of foreign technology, effectively playing them against one another to rapidly leapfrog their antiquated systems to state-of-the-art technologies. Particular emphasis is directed to the following areas: electronics; telecommunications; missile systems; air defense systems; mobility systems; and naval and aviation systems.<sup>76</sup> At the same time, their entire military production system is undergoing a massive reorganization, which is projected to help resolve waste, inefficiency, and coordination problems among many different agencies. China is purposefully avoiding large scale imports and is instead concentrating on importing limited quantities of high-tech equipment that it will "*reverse engineer*" with the intent to later mass produce.<sup>77</sup>

Technology imported for the civilian sector is also being used for defense purposes whenever possible and vice versa.<sup>78</sup> As China procures and reverse engineers the West's military systems, their military production facilities are not sitting idle. Rather, the majority of China's defense factories are geared to manufacture items such as motorcycles, refrigerators and other consumer goods including satellite television dishes, cellular telephones, and contact lenses. At the same time, *selected* factories and research and development (R&D) centers continue to modernize and build a foundation from which state-of-the-art weapons can later be massed produced in all their military production facilities. Adding a knowledge base to their R&D and technology transfers, each year tens of thousands of Chinese students and technicians go abroad -- particularly to Russia where hundreds of Chinese technicians

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<sup>76</sup> Soled, 27.

<sup>77</sup> China most likely avenue of defense modernization is through a process called reverse engineering. The process of reverse engineering involves importing a small of sample advanced weapons or platforms, taking systems apart to determine how they work, developing design specifications for a prototype model, constructing the equipment and physical plant to produce this model, training the technicians, testing and evaluating the prototype, and then mass producing the system. At present, Chinese defense industry takes an average of 15 years to reverse engineer a weapon system or platform. For further discussion on reverse engineering within the Chinese defense industry, see Christopher D. Yung, *People's War at Sea: Chinese Naval Power in the Twenty-First Century*, Center for Naval Analyses (CNA), Alexandria, VA, (CRM 95-214), March 1996.

<sup>78</sup> *The Wall Street Journal* recently reported that the PLA is using their U.S. purchased super-computers and sophisticated machine tools not for civilian purposes as was their stated intent, but rather for military purposes. For example, in 1993 the United States sold China a weather forecasting computer. U.S. military analysts indicate this system can also be used to enhance missile guidance attack planning and target selection. As a result the Chinese will likely use this system for battle management rather than for weather forecasting. Steve Gain, "New Arms Race: Fearing China's Plans and a U.S. Departure, Asians Rebuild Forces," *Wall Street Journal*, 13 November 1997, p. 1

<sup>79</sup> Blank, 13.



work within the Russian defense plants -- to study foreign science and technology. Upon their return to China, they provide significant benefit to the nation's technological developments.<sup>80</sup> By 2010, several analysts anticipate that the multiple reforms and modernizations will have put in place the infrastructure -- ranging from C<sup>4</sup>I and education systems, to logistics and R&D -- necessary to support their new strategy, doctrine and tactics.<sup>81</sup>

If present trends continue, and they likely will, within the 2010 to 2015 time-frame, China will be capable of executing its maritime strategy. Force modernization will enable the PLA to:<sup>82</sup>

- *Reduce total manpower* of its force from 3.2 million to 2 million. At the same time, China will significantly *expand its military education* revolution.
- *Increase technical competence*, and be able to accept and produce more modern technologies.
- *Indigenously design and begin construction of an aircraft carrier*. By 2010 the same analysts speculate the PLA could have up to three "pocket carrier" vessels with carrier characteristics capable of inserting small numbers of combat and troop transport helicopters into areas of vital interest.
- *Reduce the number of group armies* from 24 to 16, and at the same time upgrade all combat units to the high standards that now prevail in Chinese mobile "Fist" units.
- *Reduce the number of forces forward deployed* along China's northern borders. At the same time, with an increase in heavy airlift and sealift capabilities, will enable China to reinforce border units rapidly with modern, capable units from more central locations.
- *Develop a limited number of precision guided munitions*.
- *Convert selected strategic missile units to MIRV systems*.

Before discussing China's future maritime capabilities and potential plans to invade Taiwan, it is important to first summarize the salient points and conclusions discussed thus far. On the one hand, China has expressed the desire to become the dominant power in Asia and even possibly, over time, a global power. In the eyes of the Chinese elite, a vital first step achieving these goals is to first regain their once dominant status. This includes reclaiming their lost territory which foremost means, Taiwan. The recovery of the island through diplomatic means is their short term strategy; recovery by force a long term option. Since the late 1970's China's military has methodically and patiently been refocusing its direction, so if necessary, it can reclaim its lost territories by force. The PRC, with the financial backing of China's growing industrial base, aims to build a self-reliant world-class

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<sup>80</sup> Soled, 27.

<sup>81</sup> Soled, 268.

<sup>82</sup> Wilhelm, 3-4.

military capable of offensive operations beyond its national borders. On the other hand, America, while still maintaining its desire to be the dominate power in Asia, has reduced its regional military presence. To maintain its regional relevance, America's military is relying more and more on projecting its power from the United States in response to regional crisis. Complicating this strategy, however, is that over the last two decades America has *reduced* its forward staging capability in the Western Pacific to such a critical degree that within the next five years it will be likely limited to its bases on Japan. What becomes inherently obvious, therefore, is America' Western Pacific strategy is now dangerously flawed. The strategy is built on the premise that forward staging bases are available when in simple truth, America is severely deficient in the number of bases it can count on.

With this American *vulnerability* understood, the following two chapters focus on China's plan to design and build a modern military force to achieve its strategic aims as it exploits America's inability to react with sufficient force to make a difference. The final chapter provides considerations for how America's military can overcome its strategic shortcomings in order to maintain the upper hand in Asia..

### CHAPTER 3

#### **Building the Maritime Capabilities to Invade Taiwan**

**However strong a combat capability, an Army unit does not have any combat capability before entering its position.**

**General Sy Yu, People's Liberation Army**

The Chinese believe they will only have one chance to subjugate Taiwan by force, and when they take military action, they will make sure that they can succeed in a relatively short time<sup>83</sup> Therefore, the Chinese will not attempt an invasion of Taiwan until they are confident they have overcome their current power projection limitations. Today, because the PLA is generally considered an antiquated force designed for only large-scale land operations, an invasion of Taiwan would be a difficult and highly risky prospect and, if attempted, would most likely fail. Even China understands that. Against Taiwan's small but more modern forces, the Chinese could not achieve air or naval superiority before the United States would intervene with its capable maritime forces. If the U.S. should intervene on the behalf of Taiwan, a Chinese invasion force would be destroyed well before it could establish itself on the island. Thus, China requires more than the ability to cross the Taiwan Straits with a capable invasion force -- it needs to achieve sufficient air and sea control in the theater of operations to define the parameters of the battlefield and to close all avenues of external support to Taiwan.<sup>84</sup>

Today, the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) has approximately 125 major ships (56 percent of its naval fleet): 19 destroyers, 32 frigates, 19 LSTs, two underway replenishment ships and 53 submarines. In addition, it also possesses about 850 small fast attack craft, 120 mine craft and 30 medium and 400 smaller amphibious craft. While these numbers may appear formidable, with respect to real capabilities, they are not. At present, naval operations beyond China's territorial waters would be constrained by lack of ship-mounted air defense systems, poor antisubmarine warfare systems, and inadequate replenishment. Most of the Chinese amphibious fleet is of World War II era, and because of their limited numbers, will fall critically short of the estimated lift required for an invasion force against Taiwan.<sup>85</sup> While China's navy has recently created a well trained naval infantry branch, with

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<sup>83</sup> Peter Kien-hing Yu, *The Chinese PLA's Perception of an Invasion of Taiwan*, (Contemporary U.S. - Asia Research Institute, NY, October 1996), 12.

<sup>84</sup> Felix K. Chang, "Conventional War Across the Taiwan Strait," *Orbis*, Fall 1996, 579.

<sup>85</sup> In the interest of realism, previous scenarios that predicted an invasion of the ROC by an armada of "fishing junks" must be discarded, such craft would be useless in the initial amphibious assault – junks can not carry heavy equipment and are not seaworthy in high sea states. In addition, junks will be manned by civilian crews who are apt to panic and flee, or refuse to sail again once they become casualties. At present, China's amphibious fleet could transport no more than *one* Chinese light division in a single lift across the straits. Idea derived from Edward Dreyer & June Teufel-Dreyer in Kien-hing Yu, Peter, 91.

only 6,000 men it is too small for an invasion, and the Chinese Army is presently ill-prepared for amphibious-type operations. In addition, the vast majority of their submarine fleet is of the 1950-era Soviet *Romeo* class design and are also considered antiquated by today's standards. Most of the destroyers and frigates, lacking adequate anti-air missile defenses and other modern weapon systems, are also considered inferior by Western standards.<sup>86</sup>

The People's Liberation Army Air Force (PLAAF) is considered the weakest of China's three armed services.<sup>87</sup> With approximately 5,300 fighters (including 850 in the Naval Air Force), on paper it too appears formidable; however, most of these planes are old, perhaps even obsolete; e.g. over 4,000 are traceable to MiG-19 and 21 designs from the 1950s.<sup>88</sup> In addition, their flight training is limited indicating severely ill-trained pilots. They also have very poor mid-air refueling capability, and they lack forward air control (FAC) and aircraft warning and control systems (AWACS) type platforms that are needed for today's sophisticated battlefield. Many analysts also point to estimates that predict the PLAAF can control no more than 100 aircraft simultaneously in an air attack over Taiwan. These factors combined have led many to speculate that the PLAAF today would be well matched by Taiwan's 275 upgraded F-5s, 150 F-16 and 60 Mirage 2000 and their advanced missile and gun anti-air defenses.<sup>89</sup>

While a Chinese invasion of Taiwan is unlikely today, by 2015, if they choose to invade, the Chinese are confident they will be successful. By 2015, many commentators anticipate the Chinese power-projection shortfalls will be rectified, and as they modernize they are certainly developing a concept for a future invasion. Concurrently, they are designing and building a force, not only to defeat Taiwan's defenders, but also to contend with U.S. maritime forces, should they intervene.<sup>90</sup>

The following section highlights the likely perceptions and ideas that the Chinese military are presently considering as they contemplate a Taiwan invasion. Once these are understood, China's future maritime power projection capabilities, in particular their Navy and Air force, will then be outlined.

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<sup>86</sup> George, 3.

<sup>87</sup> Denny Roy, *To Bark or Bite? The Problem of Deception*, in Kein-hing Yu, 120.

<sup>88</sup> Nancy Bernkopf-Tucker, "The Taiwan Question and US Relations with China," *Blue Horizon: US-Japan-PRC Tripartite Relations*, National Defense University Press, Washington DC, 1997, 109.

<sup>89</sup> Peter L. Young, "48 Years Under the Threat of Attack – The Armed Forces of Taiwan," *Asian Defense Journal*, August 1997, 7.

<sup>90</sup> According to many Chinese commentators, the U.S. intervention into the 1996 Taiwan Crisis was proof enough to the PLA that the U.S. will again intervene on the behalf of Taiwan in the future.

### **Chinese Military Perceptions**

In contemplating an offensive against Taiwan, China's largest concern is intervention by the United States. As mentioned earlier, the success of the American-led coalition forces in the Gulf War -- through the use of precision munitions, advanced command, control communications, and intelligence (C<sup>3</sup>I) systems, overwhelming battlespace superiority, and sea and airlift -- made an indelible impression on the PLA's leadership.<sup>91</sup> The invasion plans they develop, therefore, will have contingencies to deal with American intervention. Most Chinese strategic planners acknowledge the United States as the world's "sole military power" with the most technologically advanced army, navy and air force. At the same time, however, these same planners also emphasize several exploitable weaknesses within the American force structure.

Finding and exploiting an adversaries weaknesses and then attacking them with their strengths is a dialectic aspect of the Chinese "*you do your fighting and I'll do mine*," military science and strategic thought.<sup>92</sup> With the 1991 Gulf War as a basis for American power projection capabilities, China has drawn several perceptions and conclusions about American vulnerabilities. Inherent with any invasion plan, China's planners will not make the mistakes of Iraq during the Gulf War. Specifically, they will not permit a U.S. logistics buildup; not give the U.S. space sanctuary for satellites; not afford the U.S. the six month opportunity for training and force deployment; and not place a critical reliance on wartime supplies from exports. They will target American advanced bases, pre-positioned supplies and equipment, rear areas, airfields and their extended lines of communications (LOCs). They will also maintain a viable nuclear deterrence capability.<sup>93</sup>

Most significant of these exploitable vulnerabilities is America's extended sea-lines of communication (Sea-LOCs). China recognizes America is a military power that "must get there" before they can fight. They appreciate the great distance from America's sources of power to the theater of operations during the Gulf War "required almost all of America's conventional weapons, that its reserves has to be called up, that six months were needed for the United States to complete the employment of troops to the Persian Gulf, and that it had to hire foreign ships to carry troops, equipment and supplies."<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Jeffrey B. Goldman, Lt.Cdr., USNR, "China's Mahan," *Naval Institute Proceedings*, March 1996, 44.

<sup>92</sup> Wan Pufeng MajGen, PLA, The Challenge of Information Warfare, in Michael Pillsbury, *Chinese Views of Future Warfare*, (National Defense University Press, Washington DC, March 1997), 323.

<sup>93</sup> Pillsbury, *Dangerous Chinese Misperceptions*, 17.

<sup>94</sup> Pillsbury, *Dangerous Chinese Misperceptions*, 17.

Chinese planners point to the fact that nearly fifty percent of the weapons and munitions used in the Gulf War had to be carried along extended LOCs by foreign ships and aircraft because America lacks sufficient strategic air and sea-lift. This situation will be no different in a future Western Pacific conflict. Assuming the vast majority of U.S. forces will re-deployed from the Korean Peninsula by 2002, all that will remain forward deployed for the United States in the Western Pacific are the 70,000 servicemen stationed on Japan and at most, three carrier battle-groups (CVBGs) accompanied by three battalion-size Marine amphibious ready groups (ARGs). Therefore, the vast majority of America's military power must be transported to theater from the continental United States -- a slow process even if the United States had a large standing army. As discussed previously, with the exception of Japan, forward staging bases no longer exist; and the few remaining American staging bases on Japan fall within the range of Chinese missiles systems. Also, many analysts believe that against American forces, China will fight unconventionally -- targeting America's extended lines of communication to attrite forces *before* they can reach the theater. This action will delay America's advance and it will also create pressure on the projecting force to guard its LOCs with naval and air assets designated for the Taiwan theater.

Chinese military analysts also realize that oil, which accounts for 50 percent of the materials consumed by American armed forces during the Gulf War, was arranged in the region rather than having to be brought via vulnerable lines of supply. The Chinese analysts ask, "If it were a long drawn out war, with many casualties and losses, can the United States promptly replenish troops, equipment, and materials and maintain the troops' fighting ability along extended and vulnerable LOCs?"<sup>95</sup> They point out other advantages in the Gulf War, not to be repeated again, such as the cooperation of 28 countries in the coalition and the role of 120 countries imposing a blockade against Iraq.

There is also speculation that some Chinese analysts believe that America's military might is severely over-rated. For example, they conclude that even with the great advantage of the Gulf War coalition, the U.S. had a difficult time defeating Iraq. From this, they infer that the U.S. would not do well fighting alone against China in Asia.<sup>96</sup> One Chinese analysts concludes,

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<sup>95</sup> Pillsbury, *Dangerous Chinese Misperceptions*, 15.

<sup>96</sup> China can safely assume that if they face foreign military intervention as a result of a China/Taiwan crisis, it will only be by the United States. Since China is permanent member of the UN and since the UN recognizes the "one China policy," it is unlikely that the United States will influence the UN to build a coalition against China. In addition, the United States cannot count on other Asian countries, to include Japan, to join forces against China. Assuming by 2015, China will possess the largest and most capable military force in the region, other Asian nations siding against them over Taiwan would not be prudent. Another factor is that other Western nations, with the exception of possibly Australia who lacks a maritime power projection capability, have little to no security interest within the Western Pacific region. Finally, because of the historical friction between the Chinese and Japanese going back to "the hundred years of humiliation,"

If we have to predict, then the chance of [the U.S.] winning is only 30 percent, because the United States forces have never fought a "whole" war overseas, while the "half war" they have fought ended sometimes with victory and sometimes with defeat. The two sides fought to a draw in the Korean War; Vietnam War was lost; and the Gulf War was a victory, but fought by 28 countries.<sup>97</sup>

To exploit American vulnerabilities and to achieve a certain victory against the Taiwanese, the Chinese military would have three obvious missions. First, they will establish and maintain control of the air and oceans surrounding Taiwan. This includes keeping American maritime forces at bay so they can not influence operations within the Straits. Next, they will transport, land and sustain PLA ground forces on the island in sufficient numbers to overcome Taiwan ground forces' resistance. Finally they will defend Taiwan in order to deter an American counter-attack.<sup>98</sup> To accomplish these, China will maintain its large trade surplus to finance the venture while it develops or upgrades the following:<sup>99&100</sup>

- A more robust, modern and capable surface fleet to include more replenishment and supply ships as well the development of aircraft carriers capable of sustained "blue water" operations.
- More modern anti-submarine warfare (ASW) ship-borne air defense capabilities.
- A more modern and capable submarine fleet.
- A significantly larger and more capable inventory of specialized amphibious shipping.
- Skill & training in conducting large scale amphibious assault operations.
- AWACS and airborne early-warning aircraft (AEW).
- Capable fleet air cover and air defense.
- Reliable aerial refueling platforms.
- All-weather capable fighter, ground attack and strategic-lift aircraft.
- The ability to project and sustain an invasion force across the Straits of Taiwan.
- More reliable C<sup>2</sup> capabilities and the ability to execute large scale joint operations.

With these invasion essential shortfalls stated, a discussion with respect to present and future capabilities of the PLA navy, air force and ground force is in order before a future conflict scenario or analysis can be presented.

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similar to how America pressured Israel to keep out of the Gulf War, the United States may even prefer to keep Japan out of a China/Taiwan crisis in a concerted effort keep the crisis from spreading throughout Asia.

<sup>97</sup> Looking back to WW II, Chinese assessment is that although the US was in a "whole" war, it fought "only half of it" because its limited participation, which began at Pearl harbor. According to a Chinese assessment, "The relentless pressure of the Russians was the factor in the German defeat and that the defeat of Germany was a forgone conclusion before the US opened the second front in France. In the WW II European theater, the US was in a coalition with the Soviet Union and Great Britain, while in the Pacific theater the US enjoyed the combat cooperation of "China, Britain and the Soviet Union." Quoted from Pillsbury, *Dangerous Chinese Misperceptions*, 15.

<sup>98</sup> Edward Dreyer & June Teufel-Dreyer in Kien-hing Yu, 84.

<sup>99</sup> Edward Dreyer & June Teufel-Dreyer in Kien-hing Yu, 100.

<sup>100</sup> Yung, *The People's War at Sea: Chinese Naval Power in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, 17-19.

## **The PLA Navy**

While the Chinese Navy is the smallest of China's three services, it is also the service undergoing the most rapid reorganization and change. Due to China's desire to develop a formidable maritime power projection capability, and since they anticipate that future conflicts will be maritime in character, the PLAN is now receiving the bulk of the military's modernization funds. In addition, the number of naval personnel has risen from 8 to 11 percent of the PLA's totals whereas the ground forces has been reduced from 81 to 75 percent of the total.<sup>101</sup> A March 1996 Center for Naval Analyses (CNA) study makes what it calls "*optimistic*" and "*moderate*" assumptions about the PLAN's future capabilities. It concludes the following:<sup>102</sup>

- *Optimistic Assumptions.* Assuming China's annual GDP grows 8 percent for 15 years, and assuming that China would be willing to purchase a regional navy off-the-shelf, the Asia-Pacific Region could, by 2010, be confronted with a Chinese navy that included several attack submarines, two large-deck aircraft carriers, a VSTOL carrier, *Aegis* cruiser equivalents, a sizable number of frigates and destroyers, and a significant force of under-way replenishment ships. This conclusion also assumes that China chooses to make these investments at the expense of other civil or military programs.

- *Moderate Assumptions.* Assuming China's annual GDP grows at 4 percent for 15 years, the region could face by 2010 a Chinese navy that included two small VSTOL aircraft carriers; a small number of *Aegis* cruiser equivalents; a medium-size submarine destroyer, and frigate fleet; and a small number of supply ships. Again, this assumes that China wishes to invest its resources for this purpose.

Likely, by continuing with their building, upgrading, reverse engineering and foreign purchasing, by the 2010 to 2015 time-frame, the true result will fall somewhere in between. However, there are some analysts who speculate that the direction of the PLAN indicates that Chinese military planners are putting emphasis on weapons and strategies to counter American naval forces in Asia, especially aircraft carriers.<sup>103</sup> This provides an explanation for why at present China's naval research and development ventures consist primarily of developing and improving their anti-ship missiles, air defense systems, submarine warfare systems, and electronic countermeasure systems. Recently the PLAN has also improved the anti-submarine warfare (ASW) and anti-air warfare (AAW) capabilities of its surface fleet. Several ships are being fitted with *Crotale* surface-to-air missile launchers, *Dauplin* helicopters, the FQF-2500 ASW rocket system and up to eight C-801 surface to surface missiles.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Dr. Gary Klintworth, "The Chinese Navy to Get Some Big Guns at Last," *Asia-Pacific Defense Reporter*, April – May 1997, 6.

<sup>102</sup> Yung, 3.

<sup>103</sup> Patrick E. Tyler, "China's Military Stumbles Even as Its Power Grows," *The New York Times*, 3 December 1996, A-1.

<sup>104</sup> Jane's Defense Weekly, "New Ships for the PLAN," 18 January 1992, 88.



With additional foreign assistance, China has also improved propulsion systems, gun loading systems, air surveillance, and fire control radar systems. The Chinese Navy has received gas turbine engines, air surveillance systems, antisubmarine torpedoes, and mine countermeasure technology from the West, Israel and Russia<sup>105</sup> China's interest in purchasing cheap but deadly anti-ship guided missiles is one of the largest threats to the U.S. maritime forces and, as a result, would be an ideal weapon within an anti-access strategy. The Pentagon and U.S. State Department have recently reported that the PLA is expected to purchase Russian made SS-N-22 *Sunburn* anti-ship missiles. These missiles are highly accurate, travel 2.6 times the speed of sound, have a range of 90 to 120 kilometers and can be fired from surface warships. In August 1997, Russia unveiled another, more powerful, supersonic missile, the *Yakhont*, which it also hopes to soon sell to China.<sup>106</sup>

Enhancements to their surface fleet include both upgrades to their older platforms and the purchase and construction of new ones. Both their *Luda-class* destroyers and *Jianghu-class* frigates are being modernized with indigenous and foreign weapon systems, power-plants and helicopters. China has also recently built a new 4,200 ton *Luhu-class* guided-missile destroyer as a follow-on to the *Luda*, and the *Jianwei-class* frigate as a follow-on to the *Jianghu*. These new ships are reported to be well-armed and balanced "state-of-the-art" combatants. They are equipped with 100mm guns, anti-ship missiles and French-built surface to air missiles and sonars. In addition, two Chinese built 11,000 ton helicopter equipped Dayun-class replenishment ships carrying two French *Dauphin* helicopters have recently been commissioned. From Russia, China has also recently purchased two modern 7900 ton *Sovremenny-class* guided missile destroyers.<sup>107</sup> Combined, these will give the PLAN at least a minimal "blue-water" capability. And with Israeli assistance,<sup>108</sup> the Chinese have deployed the *Huang* and *Houzin-class* missile fast-attack coastal patrol boats as enhancements to their already formidable coastal defense force.<sup>109</sup>

China's submarine force -- the most important ship within the Chinese fleet -- is also getting a much needed face-lift. At present, the Chinese are aggressively pursuing sophisticated undersea

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<sup>105</sup> Soled, 278.

<sup>106</sup> Steve Glain, "New Arms Race: Fearing China's Plans and a U.S. Departure, Asians Rebuild Forces," *Wall Street Journal*, 13 November 1997, A-1.

<sup>107</sup> Klintworth, 6.

<sup>108</sup> Israel has become a major weapons supplier to China. Its contribution to Chinese weapons development has generally taken from technology rather than entire weapon systems. For example, China's PL-9 air-to-air and PL-8h ship based anti-air missiles are derivatives of Israel's Python III technologies. In some cases, these exchanges have involved the transfer of classified US technology. In addition to naval systems, this has included technological enhancements for China's fighter aircraft and gun and fire control system upgrades for their tanks. Information taken from June T. Dreyer, "The Military's Uncertain Politics," *Current History*, September 1996, 256.

<sup>109</sup> George, 3.

warfare technology to modernize their submarine force. While the bulk of this fleet is "right out of Das Boot" according to one visitor, this too is changing. Acknowledging this problem, China is in the process of eliminating many of their older submarines while they are also re-equipping their less obsolete units with Russian and French sonars, radars, communications, data processing, propulsion plant, periscopes, batteries, and weapons handling equipment.<sup>110</sup> More significant, in 1995 China purchased four modern Russian *Kilo* class conventional submarines. There are reports that the Chinese *Kilo* crews are being trained in Russia. There are also reported to be discussions underway with Russia for the purchase of at least ten more *Kilos*. Furthermore, the first *Song* diesel-electric submarine, a locally produced type that incorporates "many new technologies" including a more hydrodynamically efficient hull, a lower noise 7-bladed propeller, and the ability to fire a submerged-launch, anti-ship cruise missile was launched in 1994.<sup>111</sup> Additional units of this new class are also expected.

Finally, nuclear submarines will also play an important role within China's maritime focus. The Chinese currently operate five *HAN* class nuclear submarines and are designing a new multipurpose, nuclear attack submarine with quieting, weapons and sensor systems improved over those employed on the *HAN* SSN. Construction for this new class will occur in the Bohai shipyard with the launch of the initial unit soon after the turn of the century.<sup>112</sup>

Combined these enhancements and acquisitions are greatly advancing the China's submarine technology, and by 2000 will likely change the naval balance in the Western Pacific. China's nuclear-powered attack submarines will likely be used to conduct long range patrols to interdict Sea-LOCs, conduct blockade missions and operations against surface warships. Its large diesel force will likely be tasked with inserting special operations troops, covert mining, and merchant blockade missions.<sup>113</sup> The modernization to the Chinese submarine fleet works in concert with China's *asymmetrical* thoughts of warfare, and in a time of crisis will likely pose a significant concern to American naval fleets.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> The diesel/electric type submarine, such as those currently employed in great numbers by the PLAN, are vulnerable in the open blue water because they often need to surface to recharge batteries and collect oxygen. However, these vessels are considered deadly in the shallow littorals. Also, since the U.S. Navy's sonar and ASW weapons are designed to fight and operate in the open ocean and not in the littorals, this gives them an even more of edge in the shallow waters.

<sup>111</sup> George, 3.

<sup>112</sup> *Worldwide Submarine Challenges 1997*, Office of Naval Intelligence, (UNCLASSIFIED), 21.

<sup>113</sup> *Worldwide Submarine Challenges 1997*, 19.

<sup>114</sup> *Asymmetrical* warfare is nothing more than fighting a conventional opponent in an unconventional way – i.e., in an unorthodox manner that plays to the opponent's weaknesses while at the same time avoiding the opponent's strengths. This style of warfare is not new yet it remains an effective counter to a strong conventional opponent. Modern successful asymmetrical examples include: America fighting the British during the American Revolution, the Viet Cong fighting American forces during the Vietnam War, and the Spanish peasant countering Napoleon's armies during the People's War in Spain. A recent example of asymmetrical tactics used in a naval campaign occurred during the Falklands War when a

The only thing missing for a balanced naval fleet are aircraft carriers and amphibious sea-lift platforms for carrying large numbers of troops.<sup>115</sup> However, as mentioned earlier, these may likely be forthcoming. Analysts report that since 1989 China has been pursuing these goals, particularly with respect to the aircraft carrier. Even conservative analysts predict that within the 2005 to 2010 time frame, the Chinese Navy will possess two small "pocket" carriers capable of carrying up to thirty fixed wing planes apiece.<sup>116</sup>

Finally, when analyzing the PLAN a caveat must be inserted. In considering the Chinese perception of war, it is important not to simply match and weigh China's maritime capabilities against the United States'. Within the next 15 to 20 years, China is not likely setting out to match America's navy ship-for-ship. Rather, the Chinese navy is being built to accomplish an asymmetrical strategy – striking against America's vulnerabilities instead of confronting its strengths head-on. For example, modern ballistic missiles, aircraft, diesel submarines and small gun boats equipped with sophisticated anti-ship systems can sink American aircraft carriers and other critical U.S. naval vessels. A modern "American type" naval fleet is not required. This again, likely explains why the Chinese are placing such emphasis on modernizing their submarine fleet. Understanding this, a less-than-conventional structure makes much more sense, since it is designed to accomplish Chinese maritime goals without the development of a force structure matching the U.S. Navy.

### **The PLA Air Force**

In China, the PLAN enjoys a more politically advantageous position than the PLAAF.<sup>117</sup> Different from the Chinese navy, the air force's modernization efforts are hampered by its total subordination to the army. A 1995 *Rand* study conducted for the U.S. Air Force on PLAAF concludes,

The People's Liberation Army Air Force (PLAAF) does not constitute a credible offensive threat against the United States or its Asian allies today, and this situation will not change dramatically over the coming decade ... These circumstances are a product of constrained strategic thinking in China about the role of air power, the lack of funds needed for a comprehensive modernization program, logistics and maintenance problems, the limited training available to its pilots, and the absence of a capability to develop and manufacture advanced air power weapon systems .... But in twenty years, provided the PLAAF continues to reform, develops

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single antiquated Argentine diesel submarine posed significant problems for the modern and ASW proficient British Royal Navy. The PLA's style of warfare in a Taiwan invasion scenario where it would face both Taiwan defense forces and U.S. forces, would likely have both conventional and asymmetrical aspects.

<sup>115</sup> George, 3.

<sup>116</sup> Also of note, the Su-27, have flown from Russian ski-jumps, and are considered carrier capable. Cited from George, 3.

<sup>117</sup> When discussing Chinese airpower, for simplicity, since the PLAAF and the PLAN's aviation arm capabilities will modernize at generally the same pace, when discussing airpower, this includes both the PLAAF and the PLAN.

its aerospace industrial infrastructure, and enjoys greater access to resources, Chinese air power could emerge as a much more potent force<sup>118</sup>

No doubt the PLAAF has an uphill battle in its effort to modernize. Its recognition of the problems has been the first step toward the development of a modern air force. In light of the Gulf War, in which air power played a dominant role, China is taking a greater overall interest in its own air power. The Chinese air force is slowly identifying the requirements for a more credible air power capability. As important, a recent PLAAF studies provide preliminary indications that the PLAAF may soon become independent of the Army.<sup>119</sup> Major General Zheng Shengxai and Senior Colonel Zhang Changzhi both of the Chinese Air Force Command College in Beijing write,

"The Gulf War displayed ... the advantages of air power in bringing about satisfactory operational effectiveness .... Air power is the dominant force in contemporary local war ...[and] strengthen [s] the buildup of ground forces and naval forces .... [We must] emphasize the role of the air force as the nucleus in the theory of war as a breakthrough of reforming [our] contemporary military."<sup>120</sup>

While the PLAAF continues to be hindered by its collection of obsolete second generation Soviet airframes, Chinese aircraft industry is again turning to Russian technology sources to quickly update its avionics program. In 1992 Russia and China completed negotiation for the sale and production cooperation for the Su-27 *Flanker* long-range fighter. In 1995, twenty-five of the *Flankers* were delivered. These will be followed by at least twenty-two more that are to be built in cooperation.

The Su-27 *Flanker* is a state-of-the-art aircraft and is considered roughly equal to America's F-15 *Eagle*. Its primary purpose is as a tactical fighter designed to seize and maintain air superiority over a theater of interest, but can also be used in a ground attack role. It is likely that China plans to use this fourth-generation aircraft, which has provided a quantum leap in aircraft technology from its present second generation aircraft, as the backbone for tomorrow's air fleet. In addition to the *Flanker*, the expanding defense industrial relationship between the China and Russia's aircraft industry has also led to reports that the Chinese are pursuing other joint ventures with Russia to include: technicians to assemble the MiG-31 *Foxhound*, the new Su-39 fighter and possibly even the Tu-22M *Backfire* supersonic bomber in co-production agreement;<sup>121</sup> fighter engine sales; and thousands of Russian scientists and production engineers assisting in Chinese all areas of aeronautics development. Other recent

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<sup>118</sup> Kenneth W. Allen, Glenn Krumel and Jonathan D. Pollack, *China's Air Force Enters the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, Project Air Force, (Rand, Santa Monica, CA, 1995), xiii & xxi.

<sup>119</sup> Allen, Grummel, Pollack, p. xvi.

<sup>120</sup> Zheng, Shengxai, MajGen., PLA and Zhang Changzhi, Senior Col., PLA, *The Military Revolution in Air Power*, in Pillsbury, *The Chinese Views of Future Warfare*, 301-302.

<sup>121</sup> Ball, 86.

programs include the recent design of the highly classified F-10 *Chengdu* fighter which is reportedly being built with Israeli technology (to the Pentagon's annoyance since it contains American technology). Israel is also said to be helping China develop an airborne warning and control platform similar to the American AWACS.<sup>122</sup> There is also a new counter-air fighter program with Pakistan cooperation based on the modern MiG-29 *Fulcrum*.<sup>123</sup>

Furthermore, China is trying to improve its air-to-air refueling capabilities by designing a more reliable in-flight refueling kit. They are also diligently attempting to improve their C<sup>3</sup> systems and develop an AEW capability. Accordingly, they have converted a Tu-4 bomber and possibly even a Y-8 transport into preliminary platforms for such a role.<sup>124</sup> China has also purchased at least ten Russian 11-76 *Candid* transports, which can carry 140 combat loaded paratroops and is considered equivalent to American C-141s. The *Candid* will provide a significant boost to their old fleets of Y-8, Y-7 and Y-5 transports. By the year 2000, some analysts estimate the number of 11-76 *Candid*s in the Chinese fleet to be at fifty.<sup>125</sup> Finally, many Chinese pilots and support personnel are said to be receiving their basic flight and mechanical training in Russia which is followed by more advanced Russian succored training in central China.

Despite these recent modernization programs, the Air Force continues to have significant problems. It has a rudimentary command and control system, and they lack modern airborne reconnaissance, airborne early-warning systems, and assets to suppress enemy air defenses. Their maintenance and logistical systems are presently so inferior that fighter aircraft cannot generate more than one sortie every four to five days. They also have yet to perfect their air-to-air refueling capabilities. Flight training is still limited and by Western standard, is considered antiquated. The bulk of its air fleet consists of obsolete aircraft, and the aviation industry is presently unable to design and produce a modern aircraft in meaningful numbers.<sup>126</sup> Furthermore, as mentioned earlier, they likely lack FAC, AEW and AWACS-type platforms that are essential for today's sophisticated battlefield.<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> Tyler, 1.

<sup>123</sup> Yung, 15.

<sup>124</sup> Felix Chang, "Conventional War Across the Taiwan Strait," *Orbis*, Fall 1996, 583.

<sup>125</sup> As well as the growing number of 11-76s, China has numerous other transports such as the Tu-154 *Careless* (carries 120 combat loaded paratroopers), An-12 *Cub*, An-26 *Curl* and over 500 helicopters. Cited from John Zeng, *PLA Thinking About an Invasion in the Year 2000*, in Kien-hong Yu, 151.

<sup>126</sup> Allen, Krumel & Pollack, xvi – xxi.

<sup>127</sup> While the Chinese have no known operational AEW aircraft, a "fleeting" November 1993 BBC report indicated that they may have installed the British built Nimrod radar system on three of its ten 11-76 transports to create an A-50 AEW platform. Cited from Felix Chang, 583.

With respect to maritime power projection capability and joint operations with the PLAN, the PLAAF is severely lacking. The air force seldom, if ever, works or trains directly with the navy or its aviation arm. While Chinese naval aviation would likely play the leading role in an invasion of Taiwan, it is not large nor capable enough to do it alone. Although the PLAAF states that one of its missions is to "support the navy," it presently does not train over water. In fact, the 1994 PLAAF Officer Handbook specifically states,

Flying over water and over land is completely different. When flying over ocean, there are no groundmarkers as reference points; it is difficult to estimate altitude and distance; weather changes quickly, visibility is low, and the horizon is difficult to discern; there is no navigation equipment on the ocean, and it is difficult to deal with special situations when they appear. Pilots encounter control problems over water every day, which greatly complicates training. Therefore, the farther one flies from the coastline, the more problems there are and the more difficult it becomes.<sup>128</sup>

### **The PLA Ground Force**

Although reduced in size, China's army is still a massive force with some eighty infantry, eleven armored divisions, and several independent regiments in twenty-four army groups. In addition, China's population base from which it builds its forces is certainly the nation's greatest military strength. In the words of Lt.Gen. Li Jijun, of the PLA, "If you treat China as the enemy, you will have 1.2 billion enemies with which to contend."<sup>129</sup>

While the vast majority of the PLA is still equipped with 1950 - 1960 era equipment and its massive size makes it too expensive for quick modernization, it is undergoing vast structural and doctrinal changes as it moves away from the "*People's War*" strategy to the "*Active Defense*" strategy. Most notable, the PLA has created rapid reaction units known as "*Fist Units*" which are smaller, better equipped and more mobile than the basic PLA ground units. The purpose and design of these new elite units is for quick response to regional crisis.<sup>130</sup> Similar to the German *Stormtrooper* units of World War I, Fist units have been established in each of China's combined army groups and are likely the model force for other units within their respective army groups. At present, Fist units are the vehicles for developing new tactics and doctrine, and the means for testing new ideas for the PLA at large. These new units are being formed based on adapted Western experiences to meet specific needs. In the near future they will become the training cadres for the rest of the PLA"<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> 194 PLAAF Officers Handbook, p. 172, as cited in Allen, Krummel & Pollack, p. 206.

<sup>129</sup> Li Jijun, 9.

<sup>130</sup> The PLA forces that entered Hong Kong in 1997 were likely "Fist." Of note, they were equipped with more modern arms, to include a new 5.56mm assault rifle. Cited from George, 2.

<sup>131</sup> Wilhelm, 50.

The PLA is also interested in acquiring equipment that will enhance their power projection capabilities. For example, according to Barbara Opall of *Defense News*, the PLA has acquired an airborne armored cavalry troop capability as well as eighty-six other types of special purpose airborne capable equipment including a Russian designed paratroop combat vehicle that features anti-tank weapons and large-caliber artillery. Furthermore, they are attempting to acquire the advanced *BMP-3* infantry fighting vehicle (IFV) and the *T-80* main battle tank (MBT) from Russia with license to produce them.<sup>132</sup> Other combat enhancers the PLA is adding to its growing inventory includes advanced night-fighting and GPS aided equipment as well as more modern and capable C<sup>3</sup> systems.<sup>133</sup>

While most of the PLA ground forces will for some time resemble armies that were state-of-the-art in the 1950s -- an impression confirmed by a review of its present day weapons inventory -- these mass-produced weapons still would remain highly useful in ground combat. Whatever the internal deficiencies remain with the Chinese army, by 2015 it will still continue to have the sheer numbers to overwhelm almost any opposition, assuming these numbers can be brought into play.<sup>134</sup> In any scenario in which the PLAN and PLAAF can gain and maintain control of the sea and air, if the PLA can get there, they must be considered a formidable force.<sup>135</sup>

While the PLA ground force is large and reasonably capable, with respect to an invasion of Taiwan, its weakest link is its ability to get there. While the PLA is increasing its troop lift capabilities within both the PLAN and PLAAF, their capabilities are currently inadequate for a *conventional* Taiwan invasion.<sup>136</sup> Therefore, their future emphasis in this area demands constant scrutiny.<sup>137</sup> Although there is no consensus among military experts on the number of troops required for a *conventional* Taiwan invasion, if one considers Western force ratios for World War II's Normandy invasion as an example, in *conventional* combat the offensive side should command at least a 3 to 1 superiority over the

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<sup>132</sup> Blank, 13.

<sup>133</sup> Barbara Opall, "China Seeks Arms for World Class Military," *Defense News*, 13-19 October 1997, 3.

<sup>134</sup> Edward Dreyer & June Teufel-Dreyer in Kien-hing Yu, 91.

<sup>135</sup> As far as getting to Taiwan, the PLA is presently much more capable with large-scale air assault operations than they are with amphibious operations. China's 15<sup>th</sup> Airborne Army, equipped with armored fighting vehicles, anti-tank weapons, MLRS and light artillery is modeled on the U.S. 82<sup>nd</sup> airborne division. This unit was used during the March 1996 military exercise in Fujian. Their approximate strength by the 2000 is estimated to be around 30,000. Idea taken from John Zeng, in Kien-hong Yu, 150.

<sup>136</sup> The PLA has been practicing airborne type operations since the late 1980s with its "Fist" units. Recent Chinese publications have shown airborne forces landing in mountains, urban areas, and onto airfields beaches -- terrain and objectives that match likely objectives in a Taiwan invasion. Idea taken from John Zeng in Kien-hong Yu, 151.

<sup>137</sup> According to an October 1993 *Jane's Defense Weekly* report, China has expanded its airborne forces to boost their rapid-response capabilities. Three brigades of the 15<sup>th</sup> Airborne Army are being upgraded to divisional size elements. Chinese brigades normally comprise about 3,000 to 4,000 troops and divisions normally about 15,000. However, the mating of these larger airborne brigades/divisions with the few Y-8 and I1-76 transport and appropriate civilian transports, at present, is a limiting factor within China's overall capability to deliver and mass forces onto Taiwan. This information taken from Allen, Krummel & Pollack, 169-170.

defender. Thus, based on current defensive capabilities on Taiwan, if China was to attack Taiwan today, by *conventional* standards it would require a 500,000 man ground invasion force. Based on this, a significantly greater capability with respect to both amphibious and airborne lift capability is required.<sup>138</sup>

### **PLA Joint Operations**

To accomplish its active defense strategy, the PLA is beginning to appreciate the necessity of closely coordinated joint military ventures. In future conflicts, it is likely their forces will employ modern joint and combined arms concepts. Colonel Xiao Jingmin and Major Bao Bin of the PLA co-authored a 1995 paper title, *"21st-Century Land Operations."* The paper emphasizes the importance of joint operations. They write,

The combination of land fighting forces with air and sea forces will become an integrated fighting force connected by a battle information network and formed by special units of the various army corps. Land fighting forces will be part of integrated forces in battle. Under the circumstances, the role of the army land fighting force will obviously change and become part of the network formed by the land, sea, air and space forces .... The land fighting force will continuously receive all-round, all-depth, and all-time support from air and space fighting equipment as well as from fighting forces on the sea. The integrated operations by various army corps will be able to comprehensively use different fighting methods and striking means, thus avoiding the shortcomings of fighting by a single force coordination.<sup>139</sup>

Consistent with this theme, large-scale training exercises have been conducted regularly in recent years in which mechanized, airborne, and marine units moved rapidly by transport aircraft helicopters, rail, ship, and wheeled vehicles to concentrate against hypothetical trouble spots.<sup>140</sup>

Based on current trends and anticipated progress within the PLA, by 2015 it is likely that the China's maritime power projection capabilities will be greatly enhanced, but by western standard may still appear somewhat limited and lacking. Keep in mind, however, that within China's theory of war, there remains a guiding philosophy that, *"the strongest does not necessarily win final victory, with the wisest philosophy of war and the best battle strategy and tactics being the only magic weapons for winning ultimate victory"*<sup>141</sup> It can be expected, therefore, that the Chinese will use cunning in any

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<sup>138</sup> At present 180,000 active duty ROC troops (including 30,000 Marines) defend the main Island of Taiwan. Another 200,000 defend surrounding islands. In addition, Taiwan has a 1.5 million reserve force. This information taken from Wen-cheng Lin in Kien-hong Yu, 200.

<sup>139</sup> Xiao Jingmin, Col., PLA and Bao Bin, Maj., PLA, *21st-Century Land Operations*, in Pillsbury, *Chinese Views of Future Warfare*, p. 315.

<sup>140</sup> Ronald N. Montaperto & Karl W. Eikewburg, "Paper Tiger: A Skeptical Appraisal of China's Military Might," *Harvard International Review*, Spring 1996, 30.

<sup>141</sup> Yu Guangning, "A Comparison of Chinese Western Geo-strategic Thinking," *Foreign Broadcast Information Service*, China, 18 April 1996, p. 46, translated from *Zhongguo Junshi Kexue* (China Military Science), 20 November 1995, as cited in Zalamea, 70.



military action against Taiwan -- employing conventional and asymmetrical theories as well as surprise to offset their qualitative and technological deficiencies.<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> Zalamea, 70.

## CHAPTER 4

### A 2015 PLA Invasion of Taiwan

**Wars are won on sound strategy implemented by well-trained forces which are adequately and effectively equipped.**

**Russel F. Wiegly**  
*American Way of War*

Before discussing a Taiwan invasion scenario, it must be emphasized that once the war starts; the PLA believes they can not afford to lose. Most Chinese analysts speculate that to lose the war over Taiwan would mean the loss of Communist rule in all of China. The PLA, therefore, will throw everything it has into making the victory quick and certain. In planning for a future invasion, China is fully aware that the longer Taiwan holds out, the more likely United States intervention becomes. Within their strategy, the Chinese likely assumes that if they can secure Taiwan before the United States can come to the aid of Taipei, then U.S. military intervention is unlikely. This is because both the United States and the United Nations recognize the "one China policy," and if the United States intervened *after* the PLA secured the island, in the eyes of many in the world, it would be viewed that the United States is intervening into China's internal affairs.<sup>143</sup> Therefore, the Chinese military planners prefer a short, sharp but quick plan using overwhelming force to reduce the time and opportunities available for outside support. As suggested by Zeng Liang-Pin, a Taiwanese native and Chinese military analyst, against the defenders on Taiwan, the PLA is likely to adopt a strategy that is in many ways similar to the coalition's Gulf War strategy. That is,

A lightning quick surgical strike that emphasizes a precision high speed first strike using highly scientific and technical weapons and crack units; doing away with the traditional limitations of front lines and rear areas; using a small amount of superior force with high precision destructive firepower capable of direct strike at the very heart of the enemy's command and logistical systems, thus destroying the enemy's capability to fight with organized resistance.... The Chinese Communists will insert a small number of crack units onto Taiwan to coordinate with outside forces, with many crack units infiltrating to assault key military targets and political nerve centers, while high-tech precision weapons quickly and accurately destroy the eyes and ears and communications of the defense system, thus paralyzing Taiwan's command and control network. This would achieve the objective of using a small number of crack forces to destroy organized resistance. The PLA could transport a larger force to land on Taiwan and carry out the actual occupation of the island.<sup>144</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> Edward Dreyer & June Teufle-Dreyer in Kien-hing Yu, Peter, 83.

<sup>144</sup> Zeng Liang-ping, "Leap Month of August 1995: T Day – The Warning of War in the Taiwan Strait," *Business Weekly, Taipei*, August 1994, as cited in John Zeng, in Kien-hong Yu, 139-140.

In planning an invasion, the PLA knows that the heaviest divisions of the ROC Army are deployed in northern, central and southern Taiwan. Therefore, they will likely deploy deception to make it appear as they are attacking the island's west coast and the other heavily defended smaller island outposts of *Quemoy*, *Matsu* and *Peng Hu*, when in fact their aim will be to assault from the east.<sup>145</sup> When planning for an invasion, China's strategic planners will likely consider a massive seaborne invasion of Taiwan's west coast as impractical, too costly and too predictable. While landing sites along the west coast are much closer and more conducive to landings, an amphibious attack there would run headlong into Taiwan's best ground and coastal defenses. And after heavy fighting on the beaches, they would still have to fight their way north to Taipei.

Taiwan's east coast, on the other hand, with its limited landing beaches and steep and challenging terrain, is significantly less defended. Therefore, an assault penetrating the east coast of Taiwan is the PLA's most likely and most dangerous course of action. By neutralizing Taiwan's air force on Taiwan, and by using mines and part of their large diesel submarine fleet to bottle-up Taiwan's navy and commercial fleets in *Kaohsiung* and *Keelung*, the forces on *Matsu*, *Peng Hu* and *Quemoy* could be bypassed and contained.<sup>146</sup> Also, by using their multiple fast missile attack boats as a covering force, the PLA could prevent evacuation and resupply of these outpost islands. Eventually, the defenders on these outposts would surrender, especially once the PLA established a foothold on Taiwan.<sup>147</sup>

The PLA planners also know that the preparation and staging for a large-scale amphibious invasion would take months and will require a large build-up of amphibious forces in their coastal ports. If too large, it would tip their hand and as a result, would neutralize the critical element of surprise and forewarn Taiwan's allies, particularly the United States. Therefore, the PLA will not aim for a massive seaborne assault. Instead, a *combined* airborne and amphibious assault will be the likely offensive scheme, because a balanced air and seaborne attack could be more easily masked. The staging of a limited number of amphibious forces could be overlooked as "just another PLA naval exercise," and

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<sup>145</sup> The islands of *Matsu* and *Quemoy* are reported to be defended by seven divisions (70-80,000 personnel) which have enough supplies and ammunition to hold out for a year or more. They are well dug-in with concrete-reinforced tunnels, undergrounds shelters and interconnected strongpoints that have been constantly strengthened over the last fifty years. The effort to defeat these forces would absorb too much of the PLA's energy and would take them away from their main priority – Taipei.

<sup>146</sup> Water mines are a cheap and effective weapon and can be easily laid by submarines, ships, boats and aircraft. Since the waters off of *Keelung* and *Kaohsiung* are fairly shallow, they could be easily laid off the ocean's bottom. *Kaohsiung* in particular is vulnerable to a mine blockade because of its limited access to the open sea. In addition to *Kaohsiung* and *Keelung* harboring Taiwan's naval fleets, they also are Taiwan's critical lifelines to the rest of the world. Almost 75% of their fuel is imported through *Kaohsiung*. *Kaohsiung* is the second largest container shipping outlet in Asia; *Keelung* is the third largest. If these ports were effectively blockaded with mines, submarines, surface craft and missiles, Taiwan's in-frastructure would be crippled within weeks.

<sup>147</sup> John Zeng, *PLA Thinking about an Invasion in the Year 2000*, in Kien-hing Yu, 141-152.

the airborne forces could be staged deep inside China, and would not require much obvious preparation. The combined assaults will be focused on establishing critical beachheads and securing decisive terrain such as vital Taiwanese military centers on the *Hualien-Suao-Ilan* plain like the underground *Jiashan Air Base* at *Chia-shan*.<sup>148</sup>

Air and naval superiority of the Taiwan Strait, as many analysts in Beijing have attested, will be of absolutely vital importance. To achieve a clever and cost-efficient way to neutralize the Taiwanese air and anti-air missile defenses, a PLA top priority will be to blind Taiwan's chain of radar stations and confuse air control, missile and other electronic defense systems. This suggests that the PLA will first launch a disabling surprise first strike with *Scud-B*, M-9 and M-11 short range ballistic missiles against airfields, surface to air missiles sites, and other important defense systems that exploit Taiwan's superior skills in information technology.<sup>149</sup> Unlike the Gulf War, the accuracy of these missiles will be significantly improved by global positioning systems (GPS) and more modern and accurate laser guidance systems. Since Taiwan lacks an effective missile defense, they will cause considerable damage. In addition, since these Chinese missile systems are mobile, they are survivable and can be concentrated and launched with little prior knowledge. China also has intermediate range ballistic missiles such as the *Dongfeng-3* and *Dongfeng-4* and the mobile *Dongfeng-21* and *Dongfeng-25*. Armed with conventional warheads, these will strike targets of strategic significance such as road and rail links, communication centers, and key military facilities such as Taiwan's Combat Air Command and Control (C2) center at Kung Kuan and the Combined Operations Center at Yuanshan.<sup>150 & 151</sup>

Taiwan's infrastructure and defenses will likely be further disrupted by unconventional attacks orchestrated by the PLA. From 1987 to 1996, the ROC arrested 33,671 illegal immigrants from the

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<sup>148</sup> The *Jiashan Air Base* is Taiwan's most critical military facility, and has likely been identified by the PLA as Taiwan's operational center of gravity. It is located at Hualien on the northern coast and is the biggest, most protected, most sophisticated and most modern underground air base in the Western Pacific. Built into the mountains, it protects and supports up to 200 of Taiwan's most advanced fighter aircraft. The base can withstand bombs up to 2,000 pounds, earthquakes, and typhoons. As a result, it is likely that this would be one of the key targets of the PLA. Disabling its runways will be critical if the PLA is to achieve air superiority. Substantial resources will be devoted to its destruction. It will likely be targeted by air, sea and submarine-launched missiles fired from the northeastern maritime approaches to Taiwan. When one Taiwanese officer at the base was asked if it was taken by the PLA, he admitted by saying, "that's the end of Taiwan." Cited from Peter Kien-hon Yu, *Jiashan Air Force Base: Taipei's Last Trump Card*, in Kien-hing Yu, 271-271.

<sup>149</sup> To blind Taiwan's advanced electronic systems as well as radar and missile defenses, the PLA will have to determine in advance where they are. Hence, a key part of PLA planning for an invasion will entail the smuggling of detection devices into Taiwan to help locate key sites and guide PLA missiles to their targets. This could be accomplished by the employment of both "fifth columnists" and small teams of PLA infiltrators. Forces of small size could come ashore via submarine, surface or parachute. Idea taken from, Wen-cheg Lin in Kien-hing Yu, 189. 580.

<sup>150</sup> China will likely target Taiwan's interior road and rail network prior to an invasion to prevent the ROC Army from shifting its ground forces rapidly to the PLA landing sites, so argues Felix Chang, "Conventional War Across the Taiwan Strait", *Orbis*, Fall 1996, 580.

<sup>151</sup> Zeng in Kien-hing Yu, 143.

Chinese mainland. Each year this number has grown, and many are still at large. Of course, most of these people likely came to Taiwan to find a better life. However, it is as likely that some PLA agents have also sneaked onto the island and have infiltrated every walk of life. These “*fifth columnists*” will not only weaken and distract the ROC's fighting strength, but will also create problems by causing panic among Taiwan's people.<sup>152</sup>

If China's initial strikes successfully neutralize Taiwan's central communication and C2 centers and confuse their radar and missile defenses, even for a brief period, the PLA could then launch air attacks against key targets such as naval forces and airfields, particularly the strategically important underground *Jiashan Air Base* using air launched *C-801 ASM* cruise missiles dropped by enhanced *B-6D Badger* bombers and *A-5* ground attack fighter-bombers under the protection of their fighter aircraft.<sup>153</sup>

After this wave of bombardments, China would likely follow-up immediately with additional airstrikes orchestrated and in support of their pre-planned sea and airborne assaults.<sup>154</sup> The purpose of the initial air and surface assaults would be to seize key beachheads and to prevent repair of Taiwan's military air facilities, and the unleashing of Taiwan's fighter aircraft reserves preserved within underground shelters.<sup>155</sup> Spearheaded by a parachute assault by the PLA's *15th Airborne Army*, they would focus their main efforts on seizing the *Jiashan Air Base* and other important airfields. With these secure, the PLA will then establish bases for airlifting supplies reinforcements using both military and its large fleet of civilian passenger aircraft. At the same time, China's amphibious fleet, under the escort of PLAN warships and aircover, will land to secure designated beaches along the island's east coast. With beachheads established, they would move additional combat power to include troops and heavy equipment ashore. Their immediate objective obviously to establish lodgment, and then to quickly push inland to link-up with their airborne forces.

With key airfields and beaches secure, lodgment established and a link-up by airborne and am-

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<sup>152</sup> Wen-cheg Lin in Kien-hing Yu, 189.

<sup>153</sup> Zeng in Kien-hing Yu, 148 – 149.

<sup>154</sup> While the PLA's initial missile strikes may temporarily neutralize Taiwan's air power, it will certainly not eliminate it. To achieve air superiority, the PLAAF's main asset is its sheer numbers. China is building more airfields in area adjacent to Taiwan such as *Shantou*, *Zhengzhou* and *Fuzhou*, but at present they can only accommodate about 1200 aircraft. In the early stage of a war, the ROC air force may be able to deal with PLAAF strikes. The problem will be the cumulative effect -- attrition in the long term. ROC air force leaders seem to feel, and their opinions are knowing a general sense to the PLAAF leadership which is capable of the same reasoning, that the ROC air force will be destroyed by attrition in an all-out war with the PRC. Idea taken from Edward Dreyer & June Teufel-Dryer in Kien-hing Yu, 72.

<sup>155</sup> During the PLA military exercises in February-March 1996, Taiwan's air force relocated a considerable number of aircraft to caves in the *Chaishan* area. *Kuang Chiao Ching*, No. 283, *Hong Kong*, 16 April 1996, 22-25, as cited in Zeng, in Kien-hing Yu, 159.

phibious forces complete, the next objective would be to north against Taipei.<sup>156</sup> With an effective naval blockade and the continued barrage by missiles and aircraft against the remaining Taiwanese defense facilities, the surrender of Taiwan would only a matter of time, perhaps a month or two.<sup>157</sup> The most critical element within this plan is to quickly secure the island, while American maritime forces are kept at bay.

#### **American Military Concerns With Respect To A PLA Invasion**

Before discussing the concerns with respect to an American response, a few assumptions must first be put forth. While at this juncture it is impossible to forecast a force's appropriate size and organization for an *intervention* mission of this nature, for the sake of discussion it is reasonable to assume that for America to *assist* the Republic of China in countering a large-scale PLA invasion would require, at an absolute minimum, the same size American force used for the 1991 Persian Gulf War. That is, a 500,000 man force along with the associated equipment, materials and support structure. Yet, unlike the Gulf War, since Taiwan is an island on the edge of the Western Pacific, the nature of the mission will call for the force to be significantly more maritime in character.

Because of the mission's maritime requirements, the most serious concern for the American military planner will be the capability *quickly* introduce forces into the Taiwan Theater of Operations (TTO). If America can not intervene in a timely manner with enough force to prevent the PLA from securing Taiwan, then by necessity the force becomes an *invasion* force rather an *intervention* force. In other words, if America cannot react to protect the Taipei regime before they are brought down by the PLA, then the mission becomes significantly less plausible for two reasons. First with respect to world politics, a belated intervention becomes politically more risky since it will almost certainly appear as a wedging of American influence into a Chinese internal affair. Furthermore, to attempt a *counter-invasion* of Taiwan against a large and consolidated PLA *defense* becomes considerably more costly when one studies the significant difference in mission requirements and the proportionate increase in American casualties that would likely result.

When considering the time it will take to react to a Taiwan crisis, along with the extended time-distance factor from the United States to the theater of operations, American military planner must also contend with the ever-changing variable of American politics. That is, the unpredictable, untimely and decentralized nature of America's foreign policy decision-making process. Simply stated,

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<sup>156</sup> Taipei is the capitol of Taiwan and the seat for the ROC government. It is likely that the PLA has identified this as Taiwan's *strategic center of gravity*.

<sup>157</sup> Zeng, in Kien-hing Yu, 153-154.

America's military can not react until given the "green light" from the National Command Authority (NCA).

Since the American policy with respect to Taiwan is deliberately unclear, a political decision to use force to counter China will initially strip precious reaction time away from American military planners. Although President Clinton deployed two aircraft carriers battle groups to the Taiwan region during the 1996 Strait crisis, at the time no one knew for certain what the U.S. response would be. Moreover, since it will likely depend on the circumstances, no one knows what the U.S. response will be in a future crisis. If the American President favors a strong response to a PRC invasion, then the United States might act quickly to counter the PLA. However, if the president is inclined to be cautious or reluctant to intervene, the decision to act may be delayed until the last minute. Decisive factors that may delay America's decision to intervene may include:<sup>158</sup>

- The *comparative images of Taiwan and mainland China* in the eyes of the American public, academics, the media, Congress, the administration, and the foreign policy-national security bureaucracy.
- The anticipated *cost to American lives* due to intervention in the crisis.
- The presence or absence of other crises requiring U.S. military force.
- The level of *Taiwan's determination* to resist the PRC invasion.
- The presence of a *convincing rationale* to justify U.S. intervention.

Other significant factors likely to have a severe impact on America's ability to swiftly react to a Taiwan crisis may include the following:

- America will be *unable to build a reliable alliance* that is willing to wage a high-stakes war against China.
- American forces will likely experience a *severe shortage of Western Pacific intermediate staging bases (ISBs)*.
- A PLA attack of Taiwan will likely include strikes throughout the entire depth of the island, therefore, *host-nation support (HNS) from the Republic of China will be unreliable*.

Adding to these factors is the time it will take America to mobilize and transit its own forces across the Pacific Ocean to the TFO. As a basic planning guideline, leading up to the 1991 Persian Gulf War it took the United States almost six months to mobilize, transit and deploy sufficient manpower and equipment to initiate offensive operations against Iraq's armed forces -- and different from what will likely occur in a Taiwan crisis, the Gulf War's deployment time-line depended on *undisrupted* LOCs. In addition, the Gulf War mobilization plan depended heavily on secure forward and

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<sup>158</sup> Martin L. Lasater, *A U.S. Perception of a PLA Invasion of Taiwan*, in Kien-hong Yu, 260-261.

intermediate staging bases as well as an unprecedented degree of host-nation support within the theater of operations.

As with the Persian Gulf War, the vast majority of America's heavy equipment must transit the Pacific Ocean by ship. Today's U.S. amphibious ships require, at a minimum, ten days to transit the Pacific Ocean from the continental United States to Taiwan. Merchant cargo and container ships generally require up to two weeks.

While the American ground equipment prepositioned on maritime pre-positioned ships (MPS) off the islands of *Saipan* and *Diego Garcia* are designed to arrive quickly to a theater of operations, it is important to note that these assets require naval escort for transit, and secure airfields and deep water ports for off-loading.<sup>159</sup> Further, the prepositioned equipment carried on board these ships is not combat loaded and cannot be rendered combat ready prior to off-load. In other words, this limitation **requires** maritime prepositioning forces to have access to secure ports and airfields within theater in order to conduct the "marriage" of operational units with their equipment and supplies -- neither of which will be easily available in a Taiwan crisis.<sup>160</sup>

A shortage of ISB within the region will also cause a significant problem for American forces. Today, as China builds its regional might many Asian leaders believe American regional force presence has become far too infrequent. As a result, there is a growing concern by America's Asian allies that they can no longer depend on American protection. In a recent *Wall Street Journal* article Philippine Senator Orlando S. Mercado, who also heads the Philippine Senate Defense Committee is quoted as saying, "The American always told us they would take care of our external threats. Now, they are no longer here and we have to defend ourselves."<sup>161</sup> If this current trend continues, it is reasonable to assume that America will not be able to rely on ISB access in the Western Pacific to the extent that they have enjoyed in the past. This is because America's regional allies, to include such countries as *Japan*, *Singapore* and the *Philippines* to name a few, will likely fear more the consequences from China for granting the U.S. access, than they can depend on American protection.

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<sup>159</sup> It is highly unlikely that the United States will have the luxury, as it did in the Gulf War of secure ports and airfields. Taiwan has only a few deep water ports capable of handling MPS and other large cargo vessels. Therefore, the few ports the island does possess will certainly be mines, patrolled and targeted by the PLA. While there are several airfields, many serve no value because they can not be married up with ports.

<sup>160</sup> *Maritime Prepositioning Force 2010 and Beyond: A Concept Paper for the conduct of Maritime Prepositioning Operations in the 21st Century*, a concept paper developed by the Concept Branch, Marine Corps Combat Development Command (MCCDC), Quantico, VA, 1997, 1997, 2.

<sup>161</sup> Glain, A-1.



A lack of ISBs will prove significant with respect to *how* America can deploy within the theater of operations. For example, a scant number of staging bases will be more easily targeted by the PLA. In addition, a limited number of ISBs will also have a significant impact on America's ability to replenish its naval vessels and support its forward deployed ground forces. Another point worthy of contemplation is the impact few ISBs will have on American airpower. Without an adequate number of ISBs, America will be restricted to the number of tactical fighters, bombers and attack aircraft it can forward deploy. Since American tactical aircraft do not have the capability to fly directly into combat from the United States without refueling, this restriction will have a significant impact on America's capability to achieve theater air *parity*, not to mention its ability to achieve theater air superiority.

### **Interdicting The United States**

While China's attack on Taiwan will be basically conventional in nature, its interdiction or "anti-access" strategy waged against the United States will remain within their capabilities and thus, will be significantly less conventional. As mentioned earlier, a critical aspect of the PLA's plan is to keep foreign intervention isolated from the conflict, as they know the United States' maritime forces pose the greatest threat in this respect. Therefore, to keep the U.S. maritime forces at bay, China will use the bulk of its growing blue water fleet to isolate the Taiwan Theater of Operations (TTO). This defense against the United States, however, will not be "a simple shield," like Iraq's ill-fated 1991 Gulf War strategy, "but a shield made up of well directed blows."<sup>162</sup>

China knows that American forces are most vulnerable when they are mobilizing, moving to their forward assembly areas, and beyond the reach of their logistics tail. "An effective strategy by which the weaker party can overcome its more powerful enemy is to take advantage of serious gaps in the development of forces by the enemy with high-tech edge by launching preemptive strike during the early phase of the war or on preparations leading to the offensive."<sup>163</sup> With limited efforts directed at the right place and time, China will attempt to disrupt America's cohesion and its design for battle. Using an unconventional approach, it will attempt to inflict a disproportionate amount of damage on the American forces as they attempt close on the TTO.

Even before hostilities commence, the PLAN will likely deploy one of its new carrier battle groups forward as screening force to the Pacific's second island chain. Key choke points leading from

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<sup>162</sup> Carl Von Clausewitz, *On War*, edited by Michael Howard and Peter Paret, (Princeton University Press, NJ, 1976,) 229.

<sup>163</sup> Yossef Bodansky, "China's Invasion: The Final Warnings," *Defense and Foreign Affairs Strategic Policy*, 29 February 1996, 14, as cited in Zalamea, 70.

the South China Sea and Indian Ocean will also be restricted by mines and other naval assets.<sup>164</sup> U.S. military facilities on Japan and Guam will be targeted, and American satellites that cover China, Taiwan and support the U.S. fleet will be neutralized. Approaching American carriers battle-groups will be targeted by surface and submarine launched *Sunburn*, *Yakhont*, and *C801* anti-ship missile systems. Since China believes that the destruction of even one American carrier task force would be an unacceptable risk in terms of economic and personal losses for the United States, inflicting damage to American carrier battle-groups will be a central part of their anti-access strategy.<sup>165</sup> Adding credibility to this strategy, a November 1997 *Wall Street Journal* article reports that, "In a Pentagon simulation dated 2015, China was able to neutralize a U.S. carrier fleet with a saturated attack by anti-ship missiles."<sup>166</sup>

China will also target against what it considers America's *critical vulnerabilities* -- thinly protected forward deployed assets and extended lines of communications. Using their long-range nuclear submarines, they will first focus strikes on U.S. Marine and Army prepositioned shipping (MPS) squadrons located off the islands of Saipan and Diego Garcia. Then, as America extends itself across the Pacific, PLAN nuclear and more capable diesel submarines will target the vulnerable logistics tail, that is, shipping lines. Targeting these assets will have two significant impacts: First, it will delay America from introducing these assets into the theater of operations; furthermore, to protect these assets America will have to re-direct a disproportionate amount of its naval assets, thus reducing the naval effort against the PLAN within the TTO.

To deal with American air power, China will again employ an unconventional approach. Keeping their more sophisticated aircraft and surface to air missiles (SAMs) back within the TTO to protect mainland China and their invasion forces on Taiwan, they will forward deploy their longer range aircraft to attack critical "soft" targets such as American ISBs, J-STARS, AWACs and refueling platforms. This again will force the United States to protect its rear air space with fighter and attack assets previously designated for forward deployment.

Finally, while it is unlikely that China will use weapons of mass destruction (WMD) in an invasion of Taiwan, they will certainly ensure that their nuclear capabilities are sufficiently survivable

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<sup>164</sup> These chokepoints would be best patrolled by innocuous looking trawlers fitted out for this specific tasks. This disguise would make them far less vulnerable from both naval and air attack.

<sup>165</sup> V.K. Nair, Brig. Gen. VSM (Ret.) *War in the Gulf: Lessons for the Third World*, Lancer Paper #3, Lancer International, (B-3, Gulmohar Park, New Delhi, 1991), 224. Also see Patrick E. Tyler, "China Military Stumbles Even as its Power Grows," *New York Times*, 3 December 1996, A-1.

<sup>166</sup> Glain, A-1

and accurate enough to deter their use by America. In addition, an argument can be made that having a capable nuclear threat may, in itself, deter the United States from intervention into a Taiwan crisis in the first place.<sup>167</sup>

### **Other Considerations with Respect to a Taiwan Invasion**

While it is not entirely likely, some analysts caution that there is a remote possibility that Beijing is masking its capabilities to invade Taiwan. In other words, they may possess the ability to invade Taiwan sooner than the West anticipates. This is consistent with China's principles of warfare and is an obvious way to exploit America's uncanny ability to be easily surprised.<sup>168</sup> A perception of PLA inability to invade Taiwan could work to the PRC advantage if Taipei and Washington underestimated Chinese capabilities and thus were unprepared to meet the PLA attack. Theoretically, this might give Beijing time to carry out the crucial early stages of the invasion and thereby increase the probability of the operation's success.<sup>169</sup>

Furthermore, following the warfighting philosophy of Sun Tzu, China's planners may focus on the advantage of attacking when the opponent (America) is distracted by another conflict or when his alliance(s) are weakened. Interviews by Michael Pillsbury, a military analyst at the *Institute for National Strategic Studies*, with PLA officers confirm that in the past, China has considered the advantage of taking action when an opponent is facing another conflict. Pillsbury points out that indeed China's attack on India in 1962 has been analyzed for its relationship to the simultaneous Cuban Missile Crisis. Could this be tested in a plausible scenario where the United States is involved in another crisis in the Persian Gulf?<sup>170</sup>

Finally, many analysts have speculated, in an attempt to defuse an internal crisis within China, the Chinese Communist government, or even possibly the PLA itself may elect to initiate a crisis against Taiwan. This, many Chinese theorize, will unite the nation's resolve. While this may seem like a far-fetched strategy to Western thinkers, some have concluded that Mao entered the Korean War against America in 1950 as a way to marshal patriotic feeling behind him, muffle internal opposition,

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<sup>167</sup> China possesses the world's third largest nuclear weapons arsenal, including more than 80 intermediate range ballistic missiles (IRBMs) and more than 20 inter-continental ballistic missiles (ICBMs).

<sup>168</sup> To name a few instances, America was caught off guard by the Japanese in 1941 with their *surprise* attack on Pearl Harbor, by the Chinese in 1950 with their *surprise* entry into the Korean War, and by Iraq in 1990 with *surprise* their attack on Kuwait.

<sup>169</sup> Martin L. Lasater, in Kien-hing Yu, 243.

<sup>170</sup> Pillsbury, *Dangerous Chinese Misperceptions*, 43.

And complete the construction of one of the most centralized and top-down political systems ever devised; even though in the process he sent millions of young men to their death.<sup>171</sup>

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<sup>171</sup> Comments by Nancy Bernkopf-Tucker at CAN Conference, Washington DC, 30 October 1997.

## CHAPTER 5

### Re-addressing America's Power Projection Capabilities

**We believe that we need to think about and create a true sea-based force that meets the need of the future strategic landscape ... the [naval] team should seek to sustain power projection forces operationally for significant periods, if not indefinitely, even in the face of enemy long-range precision strike capability.<sup>172</sup>**

**Lieutenant General Martin Steele, USMC  
November 1997**

Without significant attention paid to America's maritime power projection capabilities, by 2015 China could achieve its goal of securing Taiwan. In the process, it is also certainly possible that China will be able to deny America the ability to intervene effectively in the crisis. If this occurs, America's position and Asia, and in the rest of the world for that matter, will decline significantly.

America's most *critical vulnerability* in maritime crisis response is its ability to quickly project and sustain its naval power without intermediate or forward *land* staging base networks. While the U.S. has successfully relied on the Pacific's land base network for the past one hundred years, the changing strategic situation has quickly eradicated this option. As the Taiwan invasion scenario highlights, the more distant and critical the crisis, the more evident this becomes. For example, the distance from San Diego to Taiwan is approximately 7000 miles, and at least a ten day transit across the Pacific for today's amphibious ships.<sup>173</sup> Considering the lack of advanced bases and the vast space involved, America's maritime power projection capabilities are at significant risk. In addition to the lengthy transit, these extended LOCs require a great deal of naval assets to guard. If left lightly guarded, they become easy prey for an adversary with even moderate maritime technologies. Certainly, America's future enemies, in particular China, will exploit open LOCs as an economic means for denying America the opportunity to project power.

Adding to this, even if America's naval forces can establish sea-lane control from the United States to a distant theater of operations, this alone is not enough to win a Taiwan crisis. Contrary to what some naval strategists might suggest, *seapower by itself is not the projection of power*. Rather, *sea power provides the preconditions for the projection of power*. For example, during World War II,

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<sup>172</sup> Roman Schweizer, "Marine Corps Drafting New Strategic Concept for Advanced Sea Basing: Planning for Operations After 2010," *Inside the Pentagon's Inside the Navy*, Washington DC, Vol. 10 No.. 46, 17 November 1997, 1 & 15.

<sup>173</sup> George and Meredith Friedman, *The Future of War: Power, Technology, and American World Dominance in the 21st Century* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1996). 438-442.

control of the seas made it possible for the Allies to invade Normandy and impossible for Germany to invade England. The allied ground forces, however, still had to go in and seize terrain for the war to be won. Concerning Taiwan, this is no different. If America cannot influence the action on the ground in Taiwan, then it is unlikely that it can prevent China from achieving its aim.<sup>174</sup> This explains why America's maritime forces have remained focused on the requirement of power projection since World War II. This also accounts for why the U.S. Marine Corps remains the most unique and largest amphibious force in the world.

Since World War II, the United States has maintained the Marine Corps' force projection capabilities. In the early 1980s a significant leap forward in this capability occurred when the concept of prepositioned equipment aboard ships was born. Within 10 years of its inception, this concept proved its merit in the critical early stages of both Operation *Desert Shield* and Operation *Restore Hope*. However, with today's emerging threats this once viable concept is no longer universally valid. No longer can the decision to intervene and the ability to act offensively be long -- the ability to quickly react may be the difference between success or failure. The political implications combined with the increased tempo of modern warfare, precludes the slow and steady buildup of combat power in theater, and the establishment of massive forces and their attendant logistics ashore. Furthermore, no longer can America rely on concepts that depend on access to secure ports and airfields to conduct the marriage of operational units with their equipment and supplies.<sup>175</sup>

Since it is extremely unlikely that America can pre-deploy forces on Taiwan or increase its forward basing in Asia, military planners must then focus attention on *less-than-traditional* means to enhance America's maritime force projection capabilities. In the words of Dr. Andrew F. Krepinevich, "For the United States, the prospective loss of its long-enjoyed in-theater rear area 'sanctuaries' -- major air bases and ports -- at least in the early stages of a conflict, presents a major long-term challenge for its armed forces. The Marine Corps will have to ... find a way to support effective forward operations in the absence of advanced bases."<sup>176</sup>

Within this changing environment, America's maritime forces must be both robust and flexible. Their capabilities must be *re-designed* so they are afforded the following:

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<sup>174</sup> George and Meredith Friedman, 439-442.

<sup>175</sup> U.S. Marine Corps Combat Development Command (MCCDC), *Maritime Prepositioning Force 2010 and Beyond: A Concept for the Conduct of Maritime Prepositioning Operations in the 21st Century*, Concept Branch, Quantico VA, November 1997, 2.

<sup>176</sup> Andrew F. Krepinevich, Jr., "Competing for the Future: Searching for Major Ellis," *Marine Corps Gazette*, November 1996, 33.

- Capability to overcome sea and littoral anti-access strategies.
- Capability to achieve and maintain sea control.
- Capability to quickly transport and mass a large force with associated supplies and equipment into a non-permissive environment.
- Capability to reinforce the initial forces with additional follow-on forces.
- Forward bases from which air, land, and naval expeditionary forces can conduct operations complementary to, or independent of, host nation support.
- In-theater C<sup>2</sup> centers capable of directing and supporting air, sea, and land systems and providing C<sup>4</sup>I capabilities to a Joint Task Force (JTF).
- A tactical aviation operations and support base for fixed and rotary wing aircraft.
- The ability to conduct forward naval logistic support, to include forward refueling and re-supply.
- A logistics node capable of supporting movement of both prepositioned and deployed equipment and supplies to required locations via sealift and airlift platforms.
- An in-theater organizational, intermediate, and selected depot maintenance and repair facilities capable of supporting deployed air, sea and land systems.

### **Sea Basing**

To meet these requirements as well as to adapt to the changing strategic landscape, the Marine Corps is spearheading the development of a forcible entry concept that does not rely on a fixed land base network.<sup>177</sup> Along with its new *operational maneuver from the sea* (OMFTS) concept, in which future amphibious forces use the "sea as maneuver space" to conduct forcible entry operations, the Corps also sees the need to deploy, operate and fight independent of a land base network. The Corps envisions a concept called "*sea basing*" will solve both the advanced staging base and the CONUS-to-crisis time-distance dilemmas.<sup>178</sup> The concept envisions America's naval forces seizing and retaining a portion of battlespace at sea. This battlespace then becomes a source of strength, maneuver room, and sustainment to support power projection operations within the established theater of operations. Once the battlespace is secure, the concept proposes a capability for the quick deployment of a robust force to the theater "with the capability for indefinite sea-based sustainment," entirely disunited from a reliance on forward ports, airfield and land bases.<sup>179</sup>

The *combined effects* of two sea basing ideas appear most promising: *Advanced Sea Basing (ASB)* and *Mobile Offshore Basing (MOB)*.<sup>180</sup> ASB concept provides for the *rapid* forward

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<sup>177</sup> American maritime forces now are beginning to understand that the changing strategic backdrop has created a dilemma where land-based forward and intermediate staging bases might prove to become America's "Achilles' Heel." This is because these land bases can be easily neutralized by either political or military means. As a result, concepts for "sea basing" in which a waterborne mobile fortress are sustained at sea, are presently being considered since a platform of this type is likely much less vulnerable. It can operate freely in international water, and since it maintains some degree of mobility, is not as easily targeted by enemy weapon systems.

<sup>178</sup> CONUS is the acronym for *Continental United States*.

<sup>179</sup> *Maritime Prepositioning Force 2010 and Beyond*, 1.

<sup>180</sup> U. S. Marine Corps Combat Development Command (MCCDC), "Advanced Sea Basing ... 2020 and Beyond," draft concept paper, Quantico, VA: Department of the Navy, December 1997. The Advanced Sea Basing (ASB) concept was

deployment of America's 1st Strategic Echelon, where the MOB concept provides a long-term sustainment capability and a forward staging platform for follow-on heavy forces of America's 2d Strategic Echelon. Combined, these two ideas provide "localities afloat from which operations ashore are projected and supported, an assembly of mobile naval platforms which provide support to operations ashore and a protected, and an off shore 'home' for forces conducting combat ... in the littorals."<sup>181</sup> No longer tied to the restrictions imposed by land bases, the Corps believes sea basing can capitalize on the natural and enhanced protection offered by the world's seas and oceans. Envisioned is an idea centered on a mobile, protected and distributed sea bases that will, in effect, serve as "virtual" mobile offshore bases.<sup>182</sup>

### **Advanced Sea Basing**

The ASB concept provides the capabilities for the *rapid* forward deployment of America's 1st Strategic Echelon.<sup>183</sup> The idea is built around two principal components: Advanced Preposition Ships (APS) and Advance Power Projection Ships (APPS). The APS and APPS component concepts are as follows:<sup>184</sup>

The *Advanced Prepositioned Ships* (APS) will serve as "hubs" for the conduct of sea based operations with several distinct characteristics. First, the APS function as a forward-deployed repository of operationally-ready equipment, which reduces the massive demand for strategic lift in a crisis. Second, they provide platforms for at-sea arrival and assembly of follow-on forces. Third, they act as forward-deployed, afloat combat service support areas (CSSAs), capable of providing a full range of combat service support to forces both ashore and at sea. Finally, they serve as sustainment and maintainment centers for sea based power projection forces.

The *Advance Power Projection Ships* (APPS) will serve as "spokes" for the projection of sea based military power across the spectrum of operations. They also possess several distinct

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developed during the fall of 1997 by a twelve-man strategic studies group at the Marine Corps Combat Development Command (MCCDC) in conjunction with the Marine Corps' Plans, Policies and Operations (PP&O) branch at Headquarters Marine Corps, Washington DC. Concurrently, the Marine Corps' Concept Branch at MCCDC has developed an alternative concept called, *Maritime Prepositioning Force 2010 and Beyond* (MPS 2010). It is this authors belief that the ASB idea will prove to be a more viable and flexible concept than the MPS 2010 concept. Combined with the mobile offshore base (MOB), these two concepts could provide an effective maritime counter for major regional crisis such as a PLA invasion of Taiwan. A brief incorporation of these two emerging concepts in relation to a Taiwan-type crisis will be presented within the conclusion of this paper. For a more detailed description of ASB, refer to the concept paper and its three attached vignettes.

<sup>181</sup> "Advanced Sea Basing ... 2020 and Beyond," concept paper, November 1997, 16.

<sup>182</sup> "Advanced Sea Basing ... 2020 and Beyond," concept paper, November 1997, 18.

<sup>183</sup> The forces of the *1st Strategic Echelon*, or "scene shapers" compromise forward-deployed and fast deploying forces that "shape" the theater of operations to advance national interests, control crisis when it erupts and prepare an area of operations (AO) for the introduction of the nation's heavier forces. The 1st Strategic Echelon is further divided into two subordinate operational echelons. Examples of today's *The 1st Operational Echelon* include Navy-Marine Corps forward deployed forces, the Army's airborne forces and the Air Forces's long-range strategic bombing forces. Examples of today's *2d Operational Echelon* forces include the Navy-Marine Corps Maritime Prepositioning Force (MPF) with accompanying Fly-In Echelon (FIE) forces, the Army's Afloat Prepositioned Ships (APS) and the Air Force's emerging Air Expeditionary Forces (AEF). Cited from "Advanced Sea Basing ... 2020 and Beyond," concept paper, November 1997, 12.

<sup>184</sup> "Advanced Sea Basing ... 2020 and Beyond," concept paper, November 1997.17.



characteristics. First, the APPS provide a seaborne means of high-speed strategic mobility and enhanced operational mobility in a single, multi-purpose platform, thus reducing the strain on strategic airlift. Second, they provide a more capable forward presence and power projection platform. Finally, they serve as a base for command and control, maneuver, fires and aviation, which also capitalize on the inherent force protection of the sea and the growing force protection capabilities of the naval task force.

For a Taiwan-like crisis, this concept envisions the nation's future maritime forces as "surging" directly from the Continental United States (CONUS) On APPS, to link up the already forward deployed amphibious ready groups (ARGs) and the repositioned APS at sea. The at-sea linking of these assets provides an effective and rapid 'joining" of the forward deployed and follow-on elements of the nation's 1st Strategic Echelon and forms a robust and flexible Marine Air Ground Task Force (MAGTF). Upon rendezvous, the APPS "dock" to the APS and receive their "mission load" transfer of equipment. This docking also enables full assembly and integration of the naval force and as required, 'joint force links." Once the force is integrated and assembled, amphibious operations are then executed. From its position at sea, the naval force can then maneuver forward the required assets to the littoral and ashore to achieve their purpose. If the naval force with its sea based MAGTF is not by itself sufficient in size and capability to accomplish the mission at hand; it then acts as "the critical enabler" for follow-on heavy forces of America's 2d Strategic Echelon.<sup>185</sup> Of course, the authors of the ASB concept understand that only with the development of technological and procedural enhancements, as well as significant improvements to current naval capabilities will this vision be possible.<sup>186</sup>

Much like the MPS assets of today, these future assets will also be vulnerable to attack by nations possessing even a limited blue water capability. Therefore, the sea basing concept demands that elements of America's naval forces provide around-the-clock protection even when there is no crisis on the horizon. During times of crisis, besides force protection, naval platforms will also be tasked with providing escort, fires and other means of support.<sup>187</sup>

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<sup>185</sup> The forces of the 2d Strategic Echelon or "war winners" are heavy, joint forces that deploy in response to mission requirements that exceed the capabilities of the 1st Strategic Echelon. These forces are typically reliant in access to major fixed facilities that, in the case of a Taiwan scenario, would have to be secured by maritime forces of the 1st Strategic Echelon. Examples of today's 2d Echelon forces include the Army's heavy armored and mechanized divisions, and the remainder of the Air Force's CONUS-based tactical fighter wings and large supporting units. Cited from "Advanced Sea Basing ... 2020 and Beyond." concept paper, November 1997, 13.

<sup>186</sup> The *Advance Power Projection Ships* (APPS) can be designed to travel at speeds more than twice that of today's amphibious ships. The technology for achieving speeds of 40 knots on larger amphibious platforms is not a concept, it is available today. These "modular designed" APPS can also possess a full spectrum of C2 capability, to include on-military conductivity and will be both flight and well deck capable. Modularity of the APPS will allow the quick (24 to 48 hours) cost-effective reconfiguration capability of ships to meet tomorrow's power projection requirements. Most important, these concept requirements for tomorrow's APPS are entirely conceivable with today's maritime technology. For more on modularity, see Chief of naval Operations, *Strategic Studies Group XVI: Naval Warfare Innovations Concept team Reports*, Newport Rhode island, June 1997, IV-19 to IV-25.

<sup>187</sup> APS and APPS would be high pa-off targets for a future adversary. As was pointed out within the Taiwan scenario,

### **Mobile Offshore Basing**

Tied in closely *behind* the ASB is the mobile offshore base (MOB) concept. As discussed above, the forces employed with the ASB provide the nation a robust *rapid response* capability -- i.e., get there quickly with enough combat power to make a difference. However, when the force deploying off the ASB are large enough for the mission at hand, and when port, air and other support facilities are still unavailable ashore, the MOB allows the nation's 2d Strategic Echelon to quickly arrive, assemble and deploy within the theater.

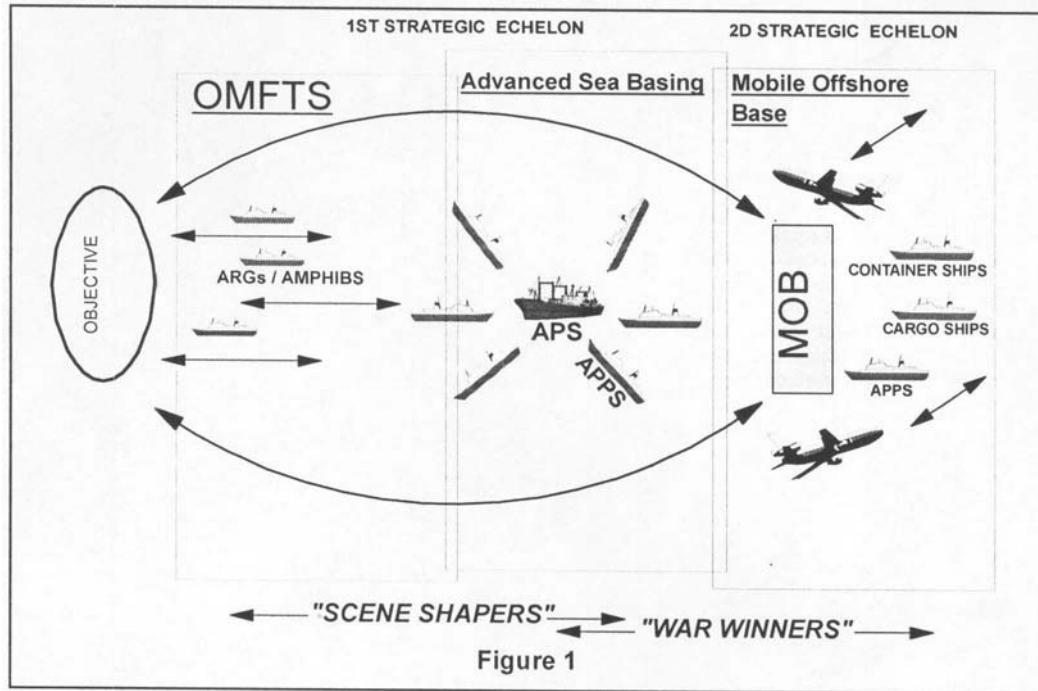
Similar in many respects to the ASB concept, the MOB while much slower in its ability to deploy, once it arrives in theater provides the JTF commander with unprecedented capabilities. In short, the MOB provides 2d Echelon Forces a structure that is conceivably more flexible and capable than a traditional land staging base. Currently under design by *McDermott Shipbuilding Inc.*, the MOB concept is based in part off of deep-water commercial platform technology. Different from the commercial platforms, however, the MOB is a self sustained and mobile unit. It is designed to transit the seas at speeds up to 15 knots (360 nautical miles per day) as five separate semi-submersible units. Once it arrives in theater, the units are then "linked" to form the complete MOB. The complete MOB is capable of supporting large scale operations without reference to on-shore infrastructure. In its present design, a full MOB can also move assembled within theater at speeds of up to 5 knots. The full five unit MOB is planned to be a mile long and 500 feet wide. It has 160 acres of reconfigurable interior space in four levels and 60 acres of open deck. Due to its massive size, it can preposition up to 3,500 vehicles, 5,000 containers, and 150 aircraft. A MOB also has ten all-purpose berths for ocean going ships, and a runway 120 feet above the waterline capable of handling C-17 operations.<sup>188</sup>

Figure 1 illustrates how the two sea basing concepts would work in concert with a forward deployed Amphibious Ready Group (ARG).

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the unprotected MPS forces off the islands of Diego Garcia and Saipan would be high priority first-strike targets within a PLA anti-access scheme. Tomorrow's naval forces must develop force protection ideas to guard these national assets at anchor and at sea. This includes force protection against undersea, surface and air strikes.

<sup>188</sup> McDermott Shipbuilding Inc., *Mobile Offshore Base: Engineered Logistics Support for the 21st Century*, capabilities pamphlet, Alliance Ohio, 1997.



A thorough analysis of a concept is the first step in determining its feasibility. The Taiwan scenario provides viable "threat-base" framework from which to measure the nation's *current* maritime power projection capabilities and shortfalls. The scenario also provides a viable framework to determine and evaluate the nation's future capabilities and requirements. As a supporting tool, the table below lists some of the possible capabilities within the sea basing concept. In addition to providing the capabilities, it is also designed to provoke further discussion and critical thought.<sup>189</sup> It outlines several enhancements, by functional area, that are anticipated if the sea basing is implemented. With the problem identified -- *capability shortfalls within America's' maritime power projection* -- and a potential solution envisioned -- *the ASB and MOB sea basing concepts* -- functional evaluation assists with determining the feasibility of these ideas. In addition, functional evaluation can aid in determining the further requirements necessary to implement these concepts. Functional planning ensures these ideas are thoroughly studied with respect to every functional area: the subordinate concepts for *mobility, command and control, fires; sustainment, and force protection*.<sup>190</sup> This table proves particularly valuable when one considers America's current power projection vulnerabilities highlighted in the previous chapter. Considering the possible maritime capabilities of the PLA twenty years hence, the sea basing concept is certainly worthy of further study and evaluation.

<sup>189</sup> This table extracted from "Advanced Sea Basing ... 2020 and Beyond," concept paper, November 1997, 18.

<sup>190</sup> U.S. Marine Corps Doctrinal Publication (MCDP) 1-2, *Campaigning*, (Headquarters Marine Corps, Washington DC, August 1997), 49.

Functional Area	Principal Capabilities
<b>Mobility</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased speed of amphibious sealift (40+ knots for ASB)</li> <li>• Enhanced surface lighterage (survivability, range, speed &amp; cargo capacity)</li> <li>• Enhanced heavy vertical lift (survivability, range and speed)</li> <li>• Organic dry dock/wet well at sea marriage capability</li> <li>• Reduced fuel requirements for tactical vehicles</li> <li>• Enhanced ground mobility of organic fire support assets</li> </ul>
<b>Command &amp; Control</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Redundant global communications network with common protocols, interfaces, multi-level security, and self healing software.</li> <li>• Intelligent decision-making aids, incorporating shared databases and improved data analysis</li> <li>• Integrated, collaborative mission planning and rehearsal system</li> <li>• Enhanced IW capabilities to deny of manipulate enemies communications and information systems</li> <li>• Beyond line-of-sight, secure tactical communication capability</li> </ul>
<b>Fires</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhanced triad of complementary systems (ground, air, &amp; maritime surface/subsurface) with increased range, accuracy, and lethality</li> <li>• Enhanced mobility of organic ground fire support assets</li> <li>• Distributed, networked platforms and units capable of a wide variety of offensive and defensive fires</li> <li>• Standardized and containerized munitions</li> </ul>
<b>Sustainment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduced demands ashore (ammunition, subsistence, fuel, water &amp; construction materials)</li> <li>• Expansion of shipboard "space;" creation/enlargement of modular, multi-use spaces</li> <li>• Perfection of high-speed, at-sea cargo handling systems</li> <li>• Development of reliable, real-time, automated, networked requirements/resources information system, meeting "knowledge requirements" across six functional areas of CSS</li> <li>• Expansion of supply distribution capabilities, both surface and air (manned and unmanned)</li> </ul>
<b>Force Protection</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhanced naval self-defense capability against air, surface and subsurface threats               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Integrated area and theater missile defense capability</li> <li>2. Extension of naval air defense umbrella to cover entire littoral battlespace</li> <li>3. Net based undersea warfare capability - requires fusing of real-time, multi-platform, multi-sensor data.</li> <li>4. Integration of UAV &amp; UUVs.</li> <li>5. Naval platform signature manipulation/reduction</li> </ol> </li> <li>• In-transit protection of forces during Ship-To-Objective Maneuver (STOM)               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. In-stride counter mine capability (wide area/rapid search)</li> <li>2. Chem-Bio protection of the landing force</li> <li>3. Assault platform signature reduction/manipulation</li> </ol> </li> <li>• Anti-UAV detection/defense</li> <li>• Enhanced Combat ID/IFF capability</li> </ul>

## Conclusion

This monograph has explored America's strategic future concerning the Western Pacific region. It has argued that America's future adversary within the region will be China, and that China's strategic ambitions will one day directly collide with America's regional interests. If the two nations ever go to war, the conflict will be over Taiwan. Considering what China may have regarding maritime capabilities within twenty years, a China invasion scenario was introduced. The outcome of this scenario exposed America's current maritime power projection capabilities, shortfalls and vulnerabilities. Without re-evaluating and overhauling America's maritime power projection capabilities, the United States military will fall short when it faces a modernized PLA over Taiwan. However, considering the recent *sea basing* concept, the ability for America to *counter* or to *deter* a PLA invasion of Taiwan has potentially been given new life. Of course, these bold sea basing ideas simply provides a

starting point for re-directing the America's maritime focus. The time to start, however, is now.

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